Contents

71. The Rise of Abraham....4
72. Covenants....8
73. The Seed....13
74. Two Tribes....17
75. Egypt....23
76. Confrontation with God....27
77. Independence Day....32
78. What is Israel?....36
79. 38 Years for Disobedience....41
80. The Law of Moses....45
81. The Difference in Preaching Between the Covenants....50
82. The Ceremonial Law....54
83. How Did They Worship?....58
84. The Tabernacle and Jesus....63
85. Conformity and Non-conformity. Part 1....68
86. Conformity and Non-conformity. Part 2....72
87. A Word to Ministers....77
88. Servitude....83
89. Servants to Sons. Part 1....87
90. Servants to Sons. Part 2....92
91. The Blessings on the Servant Sons....96
92. The Declining Fabric of Earthly Religion....101
93. Babylon Falling....106
94. The Rise of Egypt and Babylon....111
95. Fighting Egypt and Babylon....116
96. Josephs New Birth....121
97. Joseph in Mizraim....126
98. Joseph in Prison....130
99. Joseph's God. Part 1....134
100. Joseph's God. Part 2....138
101. Joseph's God. Part 3....142
102. Joseph's God. Part 4....146
103. Joseph's God. Part 5....150

104. Joseph’s God. Part 6.....155
105. Joseph’s God. Part 7.....159
106. Mizraim to Babylon.....164
107. Daniel Goes to Babylon.....168
108. Daniel and the Babylonians.....173
109. The Madness of King Nebuchadnezzar.....177
110. The Animal in Man.....181
111. Belshazzar’s Feast.....186
112. Daniel’s Privileges.....190
113. The Prophet Isaiah.....195
114. The Remnant. Part 1.....199
115. The Remnant. Part 2.....206
116. The Kingdom.....211
117. The Mountain.....216
118. The Saviour.....220
119. King Uzziah.....224
120. The structure of Isaiah.....228
121. King Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah.....233
122. Messianic Prophecies in Isaiah.....248
123. False Worship.....255
124. Clearing Out The Rubbish.....260
125. The Mountain of the Lord.....264
126. Idolatry.....268
127. Idolatry.....272
128. Don’t Get Complacent.....277
129. The Key Sins of Israel and Judah.....280
130. Who is Ruling the World?.....285
131. Familiarity Breeds Contempt.....288
132. Uzziah’s Demise and Isaiah’s Rise.....292
133. The Sign of The Virgin.....296
134. The Righteous Reign of the Branch.....300

71. The Rise of Abraham

Preparatory reading: Genesis Chapter 15

I mentioned that the Christ said He was in “Moses”, the writings of Moses, and here are examples from each of the books of the Pentateuch and there are lots of them in those five books. In **Genesis**, some verses which describe the protevangelium, the first good news of the Messiah, *Gen 3:14 And Jehovah God said to the serpent, Because you have done this, you are cursed above all beasts, and above every animal of the field. You shall go on your belly, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. Gen 3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed;* ***He will bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.*** Which answers to, *Rom 16:20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen*.

In **Exodus,** the Passover lamb was identified as Christ, the Lamb of God, *Exo 12:5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: Exo 12:6 And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. Exo 12:7 And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.* It became the sacrifice of Christ, who John the Baptist introduced as being “the Lamb of God” who takes away the sin of the world.

In **Leviticus**, there is the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, the day when sins were covered and people were cleansed of sin for another year *Lev 16:11 And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is for himself*: The entire chapter presents the Day of Atonement and there are a dozen symbols in the Israelite sanctuary pointing to Jesus’ ministry and sacrifice, *Heb 8:1 What I mean is that we have a high priest who sits at the right side of God's great throne in heaven. Heb 8:2 He also serves as the priest in the most holy place inside the real tent there in heaven. This tent of worship was set up by the Lord, not by humans.* Jesus is the Atonement, *Rom 5:11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement*.

In **Numbers** we see Christ as being a symbol of healing, *Num 21:8 And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live*. Attacked by snakes, following their own rebellion, the Israelites found healing by looking at a bronze snake lifted up by Moses on a pole, just as Jesus told Nicodemus that he would have everlasting life by looking to Jesus, *Joh 3:14 And the Son of Man must be lifted up, just as that metal snake was lifted up by Moses in the desert. Joh 3:15 Then everyone who has faith in the Son of Man will have eternal life*. CEV.

In **Deuteronomy** a prophet is foretold who would come to be the greatest prophet, like Moses, *Deu 18:18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. Deu 18:19 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him*. The Jews were expecting that prophet, and saw Jesus as the fulfilment, *Joh 6:13 Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. Joh 6:14 Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said,* ***This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world****. Joh 6:15 When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone*.

From Genesis to Deuteronomy, Jesus appears in shadows, symbols, types and metaphors, which point forward in time to His coming and redeeming mankind from sin. The Lord is there, "Jehovah-Shammah".

Genesis is divided into two main parts. Chapters 1-11 detail the story of God and his relationship to the whole word, while chapters 12-50 focus on the story of God's relationship with Abraham and his family. The patriarchal history begins with the Divine promise to Abraham that “I will make of you a great nation” and tells the stories of Abraham (chapters 12–25) and his descendants: Isaac and his twin sons Jacob and Esau (chapters 26–36) and Jacob’s family, the principal figure being Joseph (chapters 37–50), whose story tells how the Israelites came to be in Egypt. Jesus has a lot of dealing with Abraham. More coverage, in terms of chapters, is given to Abraham, than to the Creation, Fall, destruction of the old world and the flood of Noah. This must say something of the importance of Abraham, and more about Jesus’ dealings with him.

God appears to Abraham and makes a covenant with him, a promise sealed in blood, **but it is animal blood,** *Gen 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. Gen 15:2 And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? Gen 15:3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born inDmy house is mine heir. Gen 15:4 And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. Gen 15:5* ***And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.*** *Gen 15:6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.*

For a covenant to be made in Heaven itself, it required the Blood of Christ, *Heb 9:12 Then Christ went once for all into the most holy place and freed us from sin*

forever. He did this by offering his own blood instead of the blood of goats and bulls. Heb 9:13 According to the Law of Moses, those people who become unclean are not fit to worship God. Yet they will be considered clean, if they are sprinkled with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a sacrificed calf. Heb 9:14 But Christ was sinless, and he offered himself as an eternal and spiritual sacrifice to God. That's why his blood is much more powerful and makes our consciences clear. Now we can serve the living God and no longer do things that lead to death. CEV. The animal blood was carnal, the blood of Christ was spiritual.

God showed the heavens, and the stars, which no doubt were many more that we could see with all of our street lighting. In the immense black darkness of that night, God showed this man Abraham that his offspring would be more numerous than the stars. The light that would come, Christ Himself, would outshine the stars, and we would no longer need the Sun and the Moon, *Rev 21:22 And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty is its temple, even the Lamb. Rev 21:23* ***And the city had no need of the sun, nor of the moon, that they might shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it, even its lamp is the Lamb****. Rev 21:24 And the nations of the ones saved will walk in its light; and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honour into it*.

Did you also notice that God had said, "***So shall thy seed be***". He did not say "seeds" but "seed", one seed? Paul takes up the story in the Epistle to the Galatians, when He sets Christ forward as that seed, *Gal 3:16 But the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his Seed (it does not say, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one,* ***"And to your Seed," which is Christ****. Gal 3:17 And I say this, A covenant having been ratified before to Christ by God,* ***the Law coming into being four hundred and thirty years after, does not annul the promise****, so as to abolish it.* LITV. Abraham had seen his seed, and that seed was Christ, embodying the whole of His redeemed children.

The promise to Abraham included a "land" and a people, a people who were to be displaced from the land in favour of the inheritors, *Gen 15:17 And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. Gen 15:18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: Gen 15:19 The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, Gen 15:20 And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, Gen 15:21 And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.*

This promise, this covenant, made by God was not put aside when the Law of Moses was instituted 430 years later. To the contrary, *Gal 3:17 And I say this, A covenant having been ratified before to Christ by God,* ***the Law coming into being four hundred and thirty years after, does not annul the promise****, so as to abolish it.* LITV. The covenant was ratified, confirmed, made legally valid, "**a covenant confirmed of God in Christ**", a covenant in which Christ is

concerned, a covenant made with Him, of which He is the sum and substance, the Mediator, surety, and messenger, and it is made before the covenant with Moses and it comes before the covenant of circumcision. Abraham was making a covenant with Christ. **It is not a covenant with Israel the nation**.

The poor Jews who lived in the days of Jesus incarnation thought that they were heirs of the covenant, *Joh 8:39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. Joh 8:40 But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Joh 8:41 Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Joh 8:42* ***Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God****; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Joh 8:43 Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Joh 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it*.

The Jewish leaders thought that they possessed the covenant by virtue of their common descent from Abraham, yet they could not recognize Christ who made the covenant. They may have descended from Abraham as far as the flesh was concerned, but they were far from Christ, they were liars and the children of the devil, and by this we learn that common decent counts for nothing. It does not matter who your father according to the flesh is, that counts for nothing. It is whether you have a Father in Heaven, "***Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God***". Just praying "Our Father who art in Heaven" will not make you a son of God any more than saying, "*Abraham is our father*", when you do not do the works of Abraham.

Abraham and his seed made the covenant with Christ, it was not just Abraham, it was all those in Abrahams loins and those which were "in Christ", in other words, all those who were like Abraham, *Gal 3:6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Gal 3:7* ***Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham****. Gal 3:8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith,* ***preached before the gospel unto Abraham****, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. Gal 3:9* ***So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham***. It was not the faithless, the unbeliever, Jews like those Jesus spoke to, those whose "father was the devil", it was as Paul says, *Gal 3:9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham*.

The Scripture says, *Joh 8:39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the* ***works of Abraham***. One of the great works that Abraham is remembered for is human sacrifice, except that God intervened, but Abraham was prepared to do it,

Jas 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when ***he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar***? This was another example of Christ, who Moses wrote about.

Abraham was not a priest like the Levitical priests, he was not consecrated a priest, but in his day the Law had not been made on consecrating priests, and as far as I can see, anyone could sacrifice providing they did it according to God's requirement and that it was pleasing to Him, *Gen 4:4 Then Abel brought the first lamb born to one of his sheep, killed it, and gave the best parts of it as an offering. The LORD was pleased with Abel and his offering*, GNB. Job who lived at about the same time as Abraham, was another person who made offerings to God.

Abraham is God the Father to Isaac who is symbolic of Christ, and as Christ was raised to life so was Isaac, *Heb 11:17 It was faith that made Abraham offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice when God put Abraham to the test. Abraham was the one to whom God had made the promise, yet he was ready to offer his only son as a sacrifice. Heb 11:18 God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that you will have the descendants I promised." Heb 11:19* ***Abraham reckoned that God was able to raise Isaac from death—and, so to speak, Abraham did receive Isaac back from death****.* GNB.

Abraham took his son Isaac to mount Moriah for the sacrifice, *Gen 22:2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of* ***Moriah****; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of*. This was the place where the Temple was built, *2Ch 3:1 Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in* ***mount Moriah****, where the LORD appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite*. It was the same place that Christ was crucified.

This was a type of Christ's offering which the Jewish rulers, who claimed to have Abraham as their father, yet resisted his works failed to see*, Act 7:51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Act 7:52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers*.

Abraham has many dealings with Christ in Genesis, and he rejoiced to see Christ's day, *Joh 8:55 Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. Joh 8:56* ***Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad****. Joh 8:57 Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Joh 8:58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. Joh 8:59 Then took they up*

stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

Seeing Christ is something we will do if our eyes are upon heaven as Abrahams surely were, *Heb 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. Heb 11:9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: Heb 11:10* ***For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God***. With the eye of faith he saw the City of God.

Again, the New Testament writings must be understood in the light of the Old Testament, not just a verse in the Old Testament as if the proof text were enough, but in the context of the verse, which must take into account the circumstances and history which surround it.

72. Covenants

Preparatory reading: Genesis Chapter 17

We have travelled rather rapidly through the book of Genesis to get an overall picture of the key characters in the history of redemption but we shall, DV, return to the book again as the history of Christ emerges. We have been looking at the **unconditional** covenant given by God to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and we see also that God makes **conditional** covenants with Abraham, *Gen 17:7 And I will establish* ***my covenant*** *between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an* ***everlasting covenant****, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. Gen 17:8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. Gen 17:9 And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep* ***my covenant*** *therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. Gen 17:10 This is* ***my covenant****, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. Gen 17:11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of* ***the covenant*** *betwixt me and you. Gen 17:12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. Gen 17:13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and* ***my covenant*** *shall be in your flesh for an* ***everlasting covenant****. Gen 17:14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath* ***broken my covenant***.

We need to define “covenant”, of which here are a few definitions,

> In a literal sense, a covenant means a binding agreement, a legal contract. It is a seal between two or more parties. In a Biblical sense, the word covenant derives from the same root word meaning “to cut.” This means that in the culture of the Bible, covenant carried weight and was often cut, or sealed, in blood.

And,

> Generally speaking, a covenant is a promise between two or more parties to perform certain actions. The word can also be used as a verb as in “We covenant to work together on this project until it is finished.” A covenant is very similar to a promise.
>
> The concept of covenant is significant in the Scriptures. In fact, the word *testament* is really another word for *covenant*. The Bible is comprised of two parts, the Old Covenant and the New Covenant (Old Testament and New Testament). Covenant was a well-known concept in ancient times, and covenants could be made between two equal parties or between a king and a subject. The king would promise certain protections, and the subject would promise loyalty to the king. A covenant might be conditional or unconditional.

God promises to give Abraham an inheritance **without conditions**, *Gen 15:18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates*, and in another breath **God lays down conditions**, *Gen 17:10 This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.* What does this mean?

I think it means that the **unconditional covenant** is made with Jehovah Jesus, in eternity, and is spiritual in nature, *Gal 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; **but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ**.* This agrees with what he says in Romans, that it is dealing with specific souls, *Rom 9:7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. Rom 9:8 **That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God**: but **the children of the promise are counted for the seed**.* God the Father sees the Son as His heir of all things and in Him are the blessed nations of the earth held as a group, but not everyone.

The **conditional covenant** is made with all of Abraham’s earthly seed, *Gen 17:12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. Gen 17:13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. Gen 17:14 **And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people**; he hath broken my covenant*.

Here again we see that theme outplayed, first the earthly and then the heavenly, the natural and the spiritual. To the earthly nation, God offers them a covenant with conditions, *Lev 18:4 You must obey my rules and follow my laws. Be sure to follow my rules because I am the LORD your God. Lev 18:5 And ye shall observe my statutes and my judgments, by which* ***the man that doeth them shall live****: I am Jehovah*. Darby.

When God offers to covenant with the nation of Israel, He does so after He has delivered them from bondage, but it is a conditional covenant with all of the people. From Jacob's time, the nation has multiplied in number, and they came out of Egypt 430 years after he died, *Exo 12:40 Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. Exo 12:41 And it came to pass at the end of the* ***four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day*** *it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt*. There were about 2 million people, *Exo 12:37 And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about* ***six hundred thousand on foot that were men****,* ***beside children****. Exo 12:38* ***nd a mixed multitude*** *went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle*.

The covenant that they made with God has terms and conditions, *Exo 19:3 And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Exo 19:4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Exo 19:5 Now therefore,* ***if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: Exo 19:6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation****. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. Exo 19:7 And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. Exo 19:8 And all the people answered together, and said,* ***All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD****.*

This is known as the Mosaic covenant, a solemn and binding pact with the people delivered from Egypt, and they could accept the terms of the covenant or reject it. The people at Sinai, the Jews of old, **made a covenant with God**, and the new covenant Christians, Jews and Gentiles, have one **made for them by God**. The Gentile Christians, who say that they have been saved by Jesus, do not immediately acknowledge a covenant but the Jewish Christians do. The Gentiles, us, "come to Christ", but do not speak of a covenant, when we come. Yet the Gentile new covenant Christian talks a lot about the covenant with Christ later on. Do you see what I am saying? The new covenant Gentile Christian does not acknowledge the covenant at all when he makes a claim of being saved.

It seems most strange to me that we do not have an important ceremony in the time of the New Covenant, the present time of Jesus, or do we? Should we redefine what we are doing in language which is more Biblical? Christians, it seems to me, do not have such a deeply grounded feeling for the covenant, they "accept Christ" but do not think very deeply or for very long about the obligation that they are putting themselves under. It is a lifelong obligation not a thing you take lightly.

If it is broken, even at the end of your life, it nullifies everything good thing that went before and it is as if you are put right back to the beginning, *Lev 26:15 And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant: Lev 26:16 I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. Lev 26:17 And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you*.

In the beginning of the book of Acts, at Pentecost, when Peter is addressing the Jews (there are no Gentile Christians yet), he says, *Act 3:22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. Act 3:23 And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Act 3:24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Act 3:25* ***Ye are the children of the prophets, and <u>of the covenant</u> which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.*** *Act 3:26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities*.

The Jews who responded to that Gospel are the children of Abraham, and were children of the covenant, the covenant with Abraham. That covenant was not annulled and we too today are grafted in to that covenant. Jesus said, *Luk 22:29 And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; Luk 22:30 That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel*. The word "appoint" is more correctly "covenant", for it is a word of the same root, as Weymouth renders it, *Luk 22:29 and I* ***covenant*** *to give you, as my Father has* ***covenanted*** *to give me, a Kingdom Luk 22:30 so that you shall eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom, and sit on thrones as judges over the twelve tribes of Israel*. Weymouth.

Jesus covenants to us a Kingdom, and the promises that were given to Abraham are for us, and yet more He gives a new heart whereby the children of Abraham may obey the law, *Heb 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord;* ***I will put my laws into their mind****, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall*

be to me a people: Heb 8:11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. Whereas under the covenant with Moses, they tried to obey the law, but with hard hearts, under the covenant with Jesus, the new covenant, they are given new hearts.

The continuity of the Old Testament with the New Testament, is seen in Paul's description of the Gentiles as being grafted in to the Old Testament historic root of Abraham, *Rom 11:13 Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry Rom 11:14 in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. Rom 11:15 For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? Rom 11:16 If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches. Rom 11:17* ***But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree****, Rom 11:18 do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it* ***is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you****. Rom 11:19 Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." Rom 11:20 That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. Rom 11:21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you*. ESV.

The faith may be visualised as an olive tree, a natural olive tree, growing bigger over time. Then some of the branches are cut out, and we, the Gentiles, being likened to a wild olive are made part of that ancient tree by in grafting. Paul does not say that the Jewish olive tree was cut back and another tree, the Christian tree was planted beside the ancient olive, so that two trees now exist. No, there is only one tree composed of Jews and Gentiles. He doesn't say that the ancient olive tree finished growing (the Old Testament) and a new olive tree was planted (the New Testament) to replace it and that carried on as a different planting. No, it is the same old tree, but we, the Gentiles come into that tree by the grace of God, and nothing meritorious in ourselves.

The idea of God writing His law on the heart was an older testament prophecy, *Jer 31:31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Jer 31:32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: Jer 31:33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and* ***write it in their hearts****; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. Jer 31:34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto*

the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

The covenant was to be transferred from tables of stone into tables of flesh, *2Co 3:3 You are like a letter written by Christ and delivered by us. But you are not written with pen and ink or on tablets made of stone. You are written in our hearts by the Spirit of the living God.* CEV.

First the natural then the spiritual.

There is a difference being called a “Holy Nation” and behaving like a “Holy Nation”.

73. The Seed

Preparatory reading: Genesis Chapters 48 and 49, Romans Chapters 2 and 9.

The line of the covenant with Abraham is very specific, and according to Paul does not automatically go to each and every descendant of Abraham, *Rom 9:4 Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Rom 9:5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. Rom 9:6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Rom 9:7* ***Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called****. Rom 9:8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed*.

Paul is a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, *Php 3:5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee*; and he feels sorrow over his people Israel for he has a kinship with them, but he must own the fact that they don’t all live up to the high calling of God, and there is a difference being called a “Holy Nation” and behaving like a “Holy Nation”. But for Paul, who has had a transition to the Christ on the Damascus road, he knows both sides of the faith, and now he is a child of promise. *Rom 11:1 I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin*.

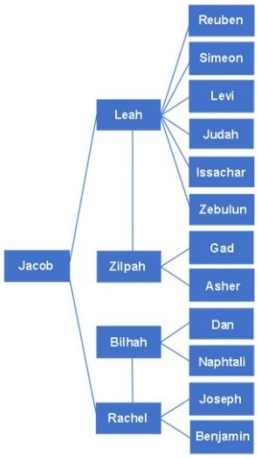
You will also see that we Gentiles who believe are “Jews” in spirit, and as much Jews as they who were born of Abraham in Gods eyes. Paul describes the nature of a Jew, *Rom 2:25 For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Rom 2:26* ***Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?*** *Rom 2:27 And*

shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? Rom 2:28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: Rom 2:29 ***But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter****; whose praise is not of men, but of God*.

A Jew may be defined ethnically, that is nationally, by his flesh or he may be defined spiritually, as Paul does here. Again the principal emerges, *1Co 15:46 Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. 1Co 15:47 The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven*. First the Natural and then the spiritual. The Christian is not a natural Jew but he is a spiritual Jew. So we have established that the children of Abraham are the seed of Christ and that this extends through the Old Testament and embraces the New Testament, without a break, and we Christians are Jews, spiritual Jews, with them of the Old Testament.

I have raised the question, "Who comes after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to receive the blessing?" Here it is not absolutely clear, but later on in the Book of the Chronicles it is made clearer, *1Ch 5:1 Now the sons of* ***Reuben the firstborn (בְּכֹרָה) of Israel****, (for he was the firstborn* ***(בְּכֹרָה)****; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed,* ***his birthright (בְּכֹרָה) was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel:*** *and* ***the genealogy (יָחַשׂ) is not to be reckoned after the birthright (בְּכֹרָה).*** ***1Ch 5:2 For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright (בְּכֹרָה) was Joseph's****:*).

The Genealogy, **יָחַשׂ** is a word meaning to sprout, and thus is an appropriate metaphor for "genealogies" as sprouting into a tree, a family tree. Birthright **בְּכוֹרָה** means a firstling, the primogeniture, or birthright. That separates the "birthright" from the "genealogy", they are two entirely different things. (The order of birth of the 12 sons is illustrated here).



The birthright was the inheritance, *Deu 21:15 If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the firstborn son be hers that was hated: Deu 21:16 Then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, which is indeed the firstborn: Deu 21:17* ***But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his****.*

The genealogy is the lineage of "someone", after all, everyone of Israel's sons had a genealogy, so what was special about Judah's? In the prophecy to his sons

on what would happen to them and their offspring, Israel says to Judah, *Gen 49:8 Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Gen 49:9 Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? Gen 49:10* ***The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come****; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Gen 49:11 Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes: Gen 49:12 His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk*.

In the Bible, **birthright** ***(בְּכֹרָה)*** = becorah, is a concept that refers to things that are due to a person because of their birth or birth order. This can include inheritance rights to property, or rights of citizenship based on the place of birth or the citizenship of their parents. In ancient Israel, the firstborn son would typically receive the birthright, which included a double portion of his father's property and the role of family leader. However, the birthright didn't automatically pass to the firstborn son, and **the son also had to be worthy and sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.** For example, in the story of Jacob and Esau, Jacob received the birthright instead of his older brother Esau because Esau despised his birthright and sold it to him in exchange for a bowl of stew.

Jacob gave this prize, the birthright, to Joseph, and the double portion fell to his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, *Gen 49:22 Joseph, you are a fruitful vine growing near a stream and climbing a wall. Gen 49:23 Enemies attacked with arrows, refusing to show mercy. Gen 49:24 But you stood your ground, swiftly shooting back with the help of Jacob's God, the All-Powerful One— his name is the Shepherd, Israel's mighty rock. Gen 49:25 Your help came from the God your father worshiped, from God All-Powerful. God will bless you with rain and streams from the earth; he will bless you with many descendants. Gen 49:26 My son, the blessings I give are better than the promise of ancient mountains or eternal hills. Joseph, I pray these blessings will come to you, because you are the leader of your brothers.* CEV.

Genealogy, ***(יִחַשׂ)*** = yachas, refers to the line of descent of a person, and that too did not necessarily fall to the persons birth order, but was according to the power, **גָּבַר** = gabar, or might of the individual, the leader of a tribe or house, but was really the grace of God to him over his brothers and Jacob prophesied it, *Gen 49:10 The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.*

So in the time of Jacob, we have the beginnings of a division which would come to a head in the time of Solomon, the split between Judah and Joseph, or Judah and the rest of the tribes. But it is also interesting that these two great scions of the house of Jacob, Joseph and Judah, come together again, like the “two sticks”, *Eze 37:16 Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For*

Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions, of which we are looking at. Judah confesses the sin of his brothers and is reconciled to Joseph (Genesis 44 v 14 ff).

The particular verse that I draw your attention to is, *Gen 49:10* ***The scepter will never depart from Judah, nor a ruler's staff from between his feet****, until the One comes, who owns them both, and to him will belong the allegiance of nations*. ISV. Judah is singled out for a particular blessing, and he holds the sceptre or rule in trust until the One comes who actually owns it.

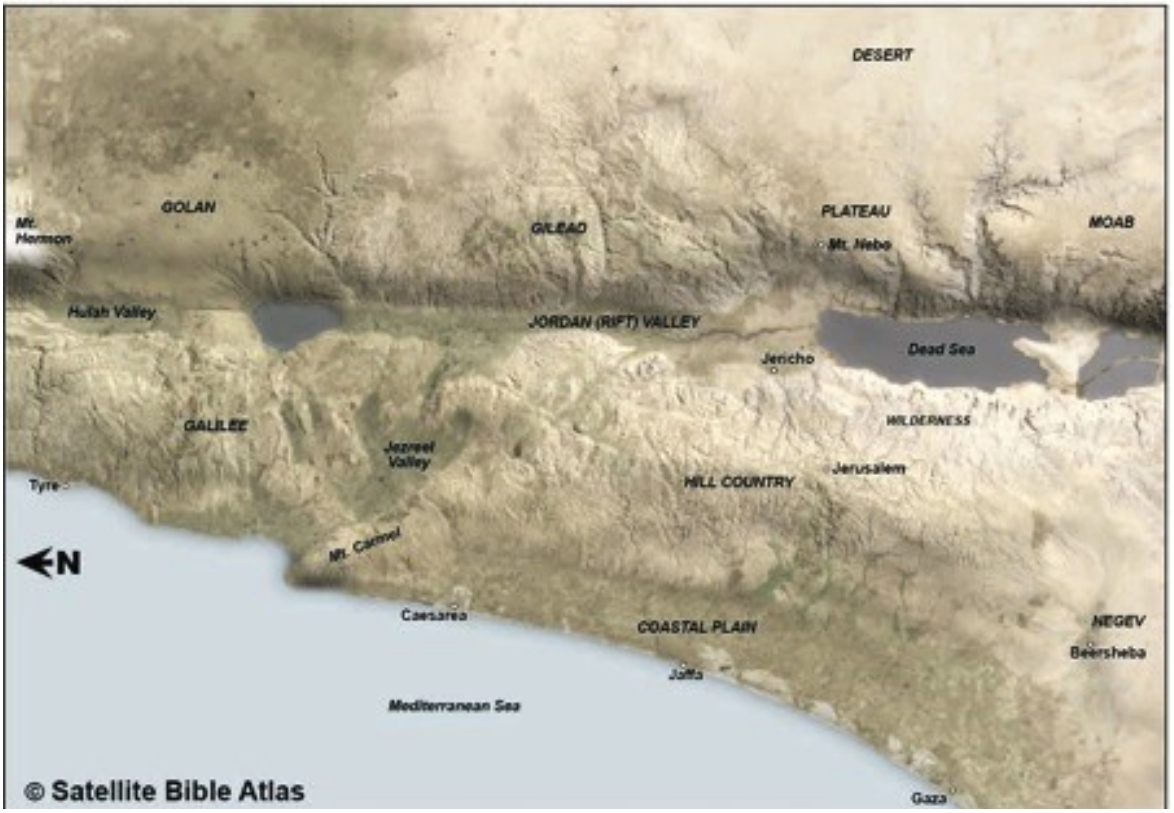
Joseph achieved the birthright through his sons, *Gen 48:17 And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head. Gen 48:18 And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head. Gen 48:19 And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations. Gen 48:20 And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh. Gen 48:21 And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers. Gen 48:22* ***Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow****.*

Although Joseph was to be blessed in the land of Israel, it was through his two sons that he was to be blessed, and in particular, through Ephraim, *Gen 49:22 Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: Gen 49:23 The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: Gen 49:24 But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:) Gen 49:25 Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: Gen 49:26 The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren*.

The “theoretical” distribution of the Promised Land is shown in the map, and I say theoretical, because they did not completely conquer the land, tending to leave out most of the land on the coastal plain. The parts that the Israelites possessed were the Mountains of Israel and the “lowlands” towards the coast, called the Shephelah.

This comes from, “That the world may know” website,

> The Shephelah is important because it is between the coastal plain to the west and the Judea Mountains to the east. Contact between the people in the mountains and the people on the plain would naturally occur in the foothills between the two.
>
> Two other factors add significance to the region. First, the main trade route of the ancient world was on the coastal plain. It entered the plain through a pass in Mount Carmel and continued through the narrow spot between the coastal swamps and the Shephelah at Gezer. Therefore, the coastal plain was to the land of Israel what the Panama Canal is to North America, perhaps even more so. Second, several valleys penetrate the Shephelah and act as corridors between the mountains and the plain. Anyone in the mountains who wished to reach the trade route (for peaceful reasons or otherwise) would use these valleys.
>
> The Old Testament Israelite, who lived primarily in the mountains, saw the Shephelah as a place of contact, in peace or in conflict, with the people of the plain and with those who used the trade route. The people living on the coastal plain wanted to control the Shephelah to prevent interference from the Jewish settlements in the mountains, so they developed great cities like Gezer, Azekah, Beth Shemesh, and Lachish to guard the area.



Whoever controlled the Shephelah dominated the relationship between the two peoples. This is the geographic setting and significance of most of the Philistine-Israelite conflicts in the Bible. (It has recently emerged again in the Israel/Palestinian conflict.)

From Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob the man, to Israel the man, and the word that he gave concerning his sons, springs a nation who will influence the world. The power that was moving events towards that end is Jesus. We have seen His manifestation from the beginning as “Jehovah”, and as He focuses down upon mankind, singling out one person and from Him making a great nation, blessing the world.

The importance of Abraham and his descendants are seen in the unfolding of the history of redemption, and to gloss over them is to miss out a key part of the testimony, which is our testimony as well. It is also noted that Abraham and his family had no law or religious practice to build their lives upon, a point noted by the apostle Paul, *Rom 4:9 Are these blessings meant for circumcised people or for those who are not circumcised? Well, the Scriptures say that God accepted Abraham because Abraham had faith in him. Rom 4:10 But when did this happen? Was it before or after Abraham was circumcised? Of course, it was before. Rom 4:11 Abraham let himself be circumcised to show that he had been accepted because of his faith even before he was circumcised. This makes Abraham the father of all who are acceptable to God because of their faith, even though they are not circumcised. Rom 4:12 This also makes Abraham the father of everyone who is circumcised and has faith in God, as Abraham did before he was circumcised*.

Abraham was justified, declared righteous, long before the law on the basis of faith.

74. Two Tribes

Preparatory reading: 1 Chronicles Chapter 11 and 12. 2 King Chapter 17.

We have seen that the history of Israel, unfolds to show what happened to Abraham and the Patriarchs Isaac and Jacob. To try and understand Israel by only looking at them in the time of Christ, is like making predictions on the origin of life from what we know in the 21st Century. It is stupid to ignore what the Lord has said in the Bible.

The tribes of Joseph and Judah are singled out by Jacob as being peculiarly blessed so what happens to them in the history of the nation? As we have seen, they have a prominent place amongst the tribes, Ephraim and his brother Manasseh, the descendants of Joseph inherit a huge swathe of the Promised Land north of Jerusalem, and Judah gets a huge swathe of the land to the south of Jerusalem.

As they tribes fight to establish command over the other tribes of the region, we see that it was not anything in themselves which made them superior, it was God's grace toward them, *Deu 9:3 Understand therefore this day, that the LORD thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the LORD hath said unto thee. Deu 9:4 Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee. Deu 9:**5 Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee**, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*.

The tribes of Israel however, did not keep the covenant, and in the time of the Judges of Israel, after the "conquest", they fell away, *Jdg 2:20 And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice; Jdg 2:21 I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died: Jdg 2:22 That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not. Jdg 2:23 Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua.*

After the time of the Judges of Israel, Israel sought a new form of Government, *Act 13:20 And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. Act 13:21 And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of*

Benjamin, by the space of forty years. Act 13:22 And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.

The act of taking a king was to displace God from headship of the nation, *1Sa 8:6 But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. 1Sa 8:7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. 1Sa 8:8 According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith* ***they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.*** *1Sa 8:9 Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them*.

The first king was Saul a Benjaminite, who failed God, leading to a second king, David, who was of the tribe of Judah. A king from this tribe of Judah existed throughout Israel's history to the time of Christ, *Rom 1:3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; Rom 1:4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:* The very first thing that Matthew establishes in his gospel, is the fact that Christ came from the flesh of Abraham, right through, in unbroken succession, and that He was the Messiah that was foretold.

But at the same time in Israel, there was another tribe whose star was rising, Ephraim of Joseph, and he would compete with Judah, and raise his own king. After the apostasy of the third king of Israel, king Solomon, who was David's son, two men strive for the kingdom of Israel. One was called Rehoboam, the heir of Solomon, *1Ki 11:43 And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father:* ***and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead***. The other was Jeroboam, a servant of Solomon, *1Ki 11:26 And* ***Jeroboam*** *the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite of Zereda, Solomon's servant, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow woman, even he lifted up his hand against the king*.

Jeroboam had been promised the kingdom by the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite, *1Ki 11:38 And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee.* The two contenders for the kingdom of Israel, one from the family of **Judah** and one from the family of **Ephraim,** stand against each other. From that moment the kingdom of Israel is split, *1Ki 11:30 And Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces: 1Ki 11:31 And he said to Jeroboam,* ***Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes***

***to thee**: 1Ki 11:32 (**But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel:)** 1Ki 11:33 Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as did David his father*.

How did the ten tribes given to Ephraim develop during the history of Israel? King Omri, some 50 years into the divided kingdom, bought a piece of land from Shemer, owner of the hill Samaria, *1Ki 16:23 In the thirty and first year of **Asa king of Judah** began **Omri to reign over Israel**, twelve years: six years reigned he in Tirzah. 1Ki 16:24 **And he bought the hill Samaria of Shemer for two talents of silver, and built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of Shemer, owner of the hill, Samaria**. 1Ki 16:25 But Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the LORD, and did worse than all that were before him*.

Note that Asa is king of Judah and Omri is king of Israel, but Israel will also be known as Samaria after this, *1Ki 21:1 And it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of **Ahab king of Samaria**.....1Ki 21:18 Arise, go down to meet **Ahab king of Israel**, which is in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it*. Samaria is also called Israel.

Samaria/Israel goes into captivity first, about 120 years before Judah goes into captivity. Judah's captivity, and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple of Solomon occurs about the same time that Ezekiel writes his prophecy, *Eze 37:15 The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Eze 37:16 Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For **Judah**, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of **Ephraim**, and for all the house of Israel his companions: Eze 37:17 And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. Eze 37:18 And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? Eze 37:19 Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and **make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine ha**nd*.

Ephraim/Samaria/Israel which had been taken captive had some of the people returned, *2Ki 17:22 For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; 2Ki 17:23 Until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day*. Samaria/Israel was removed out of the land, but some were returned, because the Assyrians did not know "the God of the land".

*2Ki 17:26 Wherefore they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them****, because they know not the manner of the God of the land.*** *2Ki 17:27 Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land. 2Ki 17:28 Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD. 2Ki 17:29 Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt..... 2Ki 17:33 They feared the LORD, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence*.

This act caused the land of Samaria to be populated by a mongrel race mixture of Assyrian and Israelite. But the prophecy of Ezekiel stated that the Samaritans and Judah would eventually come together again, "*Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and* ***make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine ha*****nd**". When does this occur?

Divided Kingdom									
Judah					Israel				
Years	King	Start / End	Prophet	Scripture	Years	King	Start / End	Prophet	Scripture
931 - 913	Rehoboam (Son)	Evil / Evil	Shemaiah	1 Ki 12, 14 2 Ch 10-12	931 - 910	Jeroboam I (servant)	Evil / Evil	Ahijah	1 Ki 12-14 2 Ch 10
913 - 911	Abijah (Son)	Evil / Evil		1 Ki 15 2 Ch 13					
911 - 870	Asa (Son)	Good/Good	Hanani	1 Ki 15 2 Ch 14-16	910 - 909	Nadab (son)	Evil / Evil		1 Ki 15
					909 - 886	Baasha	Evil / Evil	Jehu	1 Ki 16
					886 - 885	Elah (Son)	Evil / Evil		1 Ki 16
					885	Zimri (Captain)	Evil / Evil	Micaiah	1 Ki 16
					885 - 874	Omri (Captain)	Evil / Evil	Elijah 1 Ki 17-19 1 Ki 21 2 Ki 1-2	1 Ki 16
					874 - 853	Ahab (Son)	Evil / Evil		1 Ki 17 2 Ch 18
870 - 848	Jehoshaphat (Son)	Good/Good		1 Ki 22 2 Ch 17-20	853 - 852	Ahaziah (Son)	Evil / Evil		1 Ki 22 2 Ki 1
848 - 841	Jehoram (Son)	Evil / Evil	***Obadiah*(?)**	2 Ki 8 2 Ch 21	852 - 841	Joram (Son of Ahab)	Evil / Evil	Elisha 1 Ki 19 2 Ki 2-9 2 Ki 13	2 Ki 3
841	Ahaziah (Son)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 8-9 2 Ch 22	841 - 814	Jehu (Captain)	Good / Evil		2 Ki 9-10
841 - 835	Athaliah (mother)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 11 2 Ch 22-23					
835 - 796	Joash (son of Ahaziah)	Good / Evil	***Joel***	2 Ki 11-12 2 Ch 23-24	814 - 798	Jehoahaz (Son)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 13
796 - 767	Amaziah (son)	Good / Evil		2 Ki 14 2 Ch 25	798 - 782	Jehoash (Son)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 13-14
					782 - 753	Jeroboam II (Son)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 14
767 - 740	Uzziah aka Azariah (Son)	Good/Evil	***Isaiah*** ***Micah***	2 Ki 15 2 Ch 26	753 - 752	Zechariah (Son)	Evil / Evil	***Amos*** ***Hosea*** ***Jonah*** (2 Kings 14:25; Jonah 1:1) ***Micah***	2 Ki 15
					752	Shallum	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 15
					752 - 742	Menahem	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 15
					742 - 740	Pekahiah (Son)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 15
748 - 732	Jotham (Son)	Good/Good		2 Ki 15 2 Ch 27	752 - 740 (rival) 733 - 722 (sole)	Pekah (Captain)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 15
732 - 716	Ahaz (Son)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 16 2 Ch 28 Is 7	732 - 722	Hoshea	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 17
716 - 687	Hezekiah (Son)	Good/Good		2 Ki 18-20 2 Ch 29-32 Is 36-39	Israel into Assyrian captivity - 722 BC				
687 - 642	Manasseh (Son)	Evil / Good		2 Ki 21 2 Ch 33				***Nahum***	
642 - 640	Amon (Son)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 21 2 Ch 33					
640 - 608	Josiah (Son)	Good/Good	***Habakkuk*** ***Zephaniah*** ***Jeremiah*** ***Ezekiel*** (Lamentations)	2 Ki 22-23 2 Ch 34-35					
608	Jehoahaz (Son)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 23 2 Ch 36				***Daniel***	
608 - 597	Jehoiakim (Son of Josiah)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 23-24 2 Ch 36					
597	Jehoiachin (Son)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 24-25 2 Ch 36					
597 - 586	Zedekiah (Son of Josiah)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 24-25 2 Ch 36					
Judah into Babylonian captivity - 586 BC									
586-450			***Jeremiah*** ***Haggai*** ***Zechariah*** ***Malachi***						

This thought is also brought out by Jeremiah, who prophesies at the same time as Ezekiel, *Jer 31:5 Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of **Samaria**: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things. Jer 31:6 For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount **Ephraim** shall cry, Arise ye,*

and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God. Jer 31:7 For thus saith the LORD; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O LORD, save thy people, the remnant of Israel. Jer 31:8 Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither. Jer 31:9 They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for ***I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.*** *Jer 31:10 Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.*

In both the prophecy of Ezekiel and Jeremiah, God turns to the people of Samaria and Judah, who He put into captivity and nearly destroyed, and forgives them, "*He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock*". That event occurs when Jesus comes and gathers them and all people together in Him, as the high priest said, *Joh 11:51 And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; Joh 11:52 And not for that nation only, but that also* ***he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad***. Which fits with what Jeremiah said, "*Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and* ***gather them*** *from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame".*

The Samaritans came to be the outcasts of the nation of Israel, the dysfunctional mongrel race, the people who had the Scripture but not all of the Scripture, the people who had a priesthood but at Gerazim and not at Jerusalem. Jesus went to Samaria and met a woman drawing water from Jacobs well, the well of her fathers, *Joh 4:9 Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans*. But this animosity and competition would be removed by the Messiah, *Joh 4:20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Joh 4:21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me,* ***the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father****. Joh 4:22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. Joh 4:23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. Joh 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*.

And there is fulfilled the Word of God, "*Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and* ***make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine han*****d**". From this point forward, the Gospel is preached, *Act 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that*

*the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all **Judaea**, and in **Samaria**, and unto the uttermost part of the earth*.

Jesus concentrates His ministry upon the Northern half of the kingdom of Israel, in the Galilee region, and goes to the Southern region, the region of Judah, the Yehudi, the Jews, at the finale of His ministry, *Act 10:36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) Act 10:37 That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and **began from Galilee**, after the baptism which John preached; Act 10:38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him*.

No wonder Pharaoh saw in Joseph “the Saviour of the world”, Zaphnathpaaneah, he was looking at Christ in the future, *1Jn 4:13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. 1Jn 4:14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be **the Saviour of the world***.

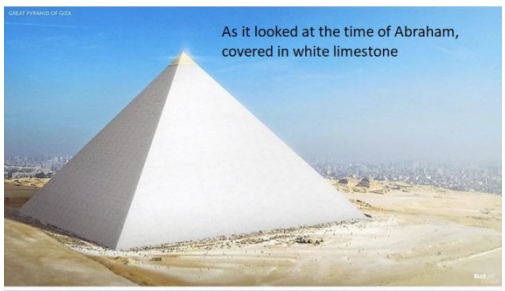
First the natural, then the spiritual.

75. Egypt

Preparatory reading: Exodus Chapter 12

Mention the name Egypt and immediately you will think of the desert, pyramids, and camels with an ancient people who have now fled into history. The role in their relationship with Israel is seen only as an oppressor, but I think that it is much more than this.

We must go back to the post flood period to see the origin of Egypt in the descendents of one of Noah’s three sons, Ham, *Gen 10:6 And the sons of **Ham**; Cush, and Mizraim, and Phut, and Canaan*. From this genealogy we can see that the Canaanites who peopled the Promised Land were related to the Egyptians, which name came from Mizraim, or מִצְרַי. By the time of Abraham, the great Pyramid of Khufu already existed and must have certainly impressed Abraham when he first entered Egypt, and he was familiar with the Ziggurat at Ur, but these pyramids were larger.



Egypt in the Bible plays a dual role. It is both a place of protection and refuge and also a place of wickedness and oppression, a place to "come up out of" and a place to flee to. Abraham went to Egypt partially because of

its agricultural stability, when things were difficult in Canaan and Jacob does likewise. Abraham seeks refuge in Egypt because "there was a famine in the land", *Gen 12:10 And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.* Abraham must leave Egypt when Pharaoh wants to place Sarah in the royal harem, *Gen 12:20 And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had*.

The Hebrew title “Pharaoh” derives from the Egyptian words “great house,” in much the same way that we refer to the “White House.” This is also the first recorded encounter between the divine ruler of Egypt and Jehovah Jesus, the God of Abraham, *Gen 12:17 And Jehovah plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife. Gen 12:18 And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this thou hast done to me? Why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife?* Darby. It seems that Jesus spoke with Pharaoh, and Pharaoh obeyed Him. Presumably, one of the maidservants given to Sarah came from Pharaoh, *Gen 16:3 And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar, the Egyptian, her maidservant, at the end of ten years that Abram had dwelt in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram, as his w*ife.

When Joseph the son of Jacob was sold to the Midianite traders, a wonderful story (Genesis Chapters 31 to 50) about the fall and rise, and fall again and rise again, of this striking man, in the land of Egypt. His remarkable gift as the interpreter of dreams singled him out for the top job in Egypt. Through his Divine gift Joseph not only increases his standing in Egypt, he saves his family from starvation and rebukes his brethren for their treacherous behaviour. Despite this pastoral people being unclean in Egyptian eyes, they none the less have favour in the sight of Pharaoh, *Gen 43:32 And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians. Gen 46:33 And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation? Gen 46:34 That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians*.

A theme of the Joseph story is that God is not restricted by national boundaries. He blesses the property of Potiphar (and, by extension, Potiphar himself) when Joseph is his overseer (Gen 39:5). Egypt had a reputation as a place of wisdom, and Joseph appeals to this by calling on them to find a man "discerning and wise" (Gen 41:33). But everything changes when this Pharaoh dies and another one arises, one who did not know about Joseph and so begins the persecution of the Israelites. Egypt is no longer a saviour it is a persecutor of God’s people.

The cry of the people came to Jesus, *Exo 3:7 And the Jehovah said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; Exo 3:8 And I am come*

down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Exo 3:9 Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Exo 3:10 Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt. This was to become a show of strength between Pharaoh and his god's and Moses and Jehovah.

The Egyptians could not cope with the power of God in the 10 plagues and eventually the people were asked to leave, *Exo 12:33 And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men. Exo 12:34 And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneadingtroughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders. Exo 12:35 And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment*. The question remains, why didn't the Lord just smite the Egyptians and let the people go without giving the 10 plagues? I think that the plagues were as much for Israel as they were for the Egyptians, and the people of Israel had to know where they stood, and that what befell the Egyptians could also befall them.

Egypt is like the world in the sense that it offers opportunities to the people of God, sometimes these are amoral, that is they are neither good or bad, for example there is nothing moral about drinking fresh water, it is essential for life. Other choices are moral, and these are defined by God and you just avoid breaking God's rules. Egypt can have a lot to offer the person and it can captivate them and blind their eyes to the reality of the consequences of those choices. At this stage we are taken captive by Egypt, and so Egypt may provide for us and it may captivate us.

For all the oppression in the captivity, it wasn't long before the people realised that their fleshly lusts were adequately met in Egypt, *Num 11:4 And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? Num 11:5 We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: Num 11:6 But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes*. So Jesus gave them flesh until it came out of their noses, *Num 11:19 Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; Num 11:20 But even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the LORD which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt*?

Living in this world is a subtle balance between living a righteous life, a good life, and not partaking in the sins that this life offers. Lot made an assessment of

Sodom with his eyes not with his with spirit, he saw what the world had to offer and that was all he needed to know, *Gen 13:9 Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left**. Gen 13:10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar**. Gen 13:11 Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Gen 13:12 Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. Gen 13:13 But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly*.

Some time later, he realised the extent of the wickedness of the men of Sodom and had to be rescued by Jesus' companions, *Gen 19:11 And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door. Gen 19:12 And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place: Gen 19:13 For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it.*

We should not think Lot was bad for living in that place, to the contrary he was not, *2Pe 2:7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: 2Pe 2:8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)* He just underestimated the problem, and he is like many Christians today, taken in by what they see and they leave God's reason behind them, as this story from Charles Spurgeon illustrates,

> A Christian girl once told Charles Spurgeon, that she was about to marry a man who didn't attend church and made no allegiance whatsoever to Jesus. As any good pastor would do Spurgeon reminded her of the command from 2 Corinthians 6:14 *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*
>
> The girl, however, had another plan. She explained that once she was married to the young man she would lift him up spiritually. Spurgeon listened to what she was saying and then asked her to stand on a chair. The girl was puzzled by such an odd request, but she obliged anyway. Once she was standing in the chair, Spurgeon then said to her, *"Now you try to pull me up to your level."* She tugged hard on the portly preacher, but no matter how hard she pulled she couldn't pull him up on the chair with her.

> Now it was Spurgeon's turn. He said*, "Now I am going to pull you down, and I want you to do your best to remain where you are."* Despite the girl's best efforts, Spurgeon easily pulled her down from that chair. Then he said to her, *"That is what will happen if you marry that man. You won't lift him up, but he will pull you down."*

Egypt offers much but it also takes much, and you may be wondering why I mentioned Sodom when we were talking about Egypt. I think that they are both illustrations of the same world, as Lot saw "that it *was* well watered everywhere, before the LORD destroyed **Sodom** and Gomorrah, *even* as the garden of the LORD, like the land of **Egypt**". This is also mentioned in John's Revelation, where a comparison between Sodom and Egypt is made, *Rev 11:8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the* ***great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified***.

Sodom and Egypt were the spiritual equivalent of the City of Jerusalem on earth where the Lord was crucified. This makes it a dark place, for in spite of it offering fruit to eat its fruit will kill if given the chance and that is what satan did in Egypt

Moses was not stupid and he saw the dangers of Egypt, *Heb 11:24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Heb 11:25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Heb 11:26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. Heb 11:27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Heb 11:28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them*.

Someone wisely said, "The problem was not getting the Children of Israel out of Egypt, it was getting Egypt out of the Children of Israel".

Babylon too has a similar part to play in the history of redemption as both the punisher and the salvation of the righteous nation. The Jews were sent to Babylon after the fall of Jerusalem (punishment) but were sent there for their health (salvation). Jeremiah, who prophesies at the time of the Babylonian captivity, says, *Jer 29:4 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon; Jer 29:5 Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; Jer 29:6 Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. Jer 29:7 And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace. Jer 29:8 For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed. Jer 29:9 For they*

prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the LORD. Jer 29:10 For thus saith the LORD, ***That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.*** *Jer 29:11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end*.

Just as people found refuge in Egypt, they found refuge in Babylon, yet it was only while the people of God were there that Babylon prospered. Babylon the great, mother of harlots is that world system that is anti-Christian, *Rev 18:2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. Rev 18:3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. Rev 18:4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying,* ***Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*** *Rev 18:5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Rev 18:6 Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. Rev 18:7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow*.

I will return to this subject in a later study.

76. Confrontation with God

Preparatory reading: Genesis Chapter 18 and John Chapter 8.

We have seen that the histories of Genesis, particularly the accounts of Abraham, have a greater meaning when considered in the life with Christ. They all point to something much bigger. The things that happened in the Old Testament are key to understanding the New Testament, and the things in the Gospels and the New Testament cannot be fully understood without understanding the Old Testament. Because Jesus was there in that Old Testament, we must go back and find Him and what He said.

I gradually came to see this truth over the years and it cemented the Bible together, the Old and the New Testaments. The linking factor is Jesus, who is shown in many guises in the Old Testament. I had not the slightest idea of this when I came to the Lord, I was not taught about Jesus in the Old Testament and to me the Old Testament was a dead book of ancient history. It is not, it is the

book that documents why Jesus came and the nature of man that He came to change. You cannot neglect it.

Let's look at another event from Abrahams life in which Christ appears to him, *Gen 18:1 And **Jehovah** appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre. And he was sitting at the door of the tent in the heat of the day. Gen 18:2 And he lifted up his eyes and looked; and, behold, three men were standing by him. And he saw, and he ran to meet them from the entrance of the tent. And he bowed to the ground. Gen 18:3 And he said, My Lord, if now I have found favor in Your sight, I beg You, do not leave from near Your servant. Gen 18:4 Please allow a little water to be taken and You wash Your feet, and rest under the tree. Gen 18:5 And I will bring a bite of bread and will sustain Your heart. Then You may pass on, for this is why You have passed over to Your servant. And they said, Do so, as you have said. Gen 18:6 And Abraham ran into the tent to Sarah and said, Hurry, prepare three measures of fine meal, knead it and make cakes*. LITV.

I said Jesus appeared to Abraham and I deduce it from John's Gospel, *Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Joh 1:2 He was in the beginning with God. Joh 1:3 **All things came into being through Him, and without Him not even one thing came into being that has come into being**.....Joh 1:9 He was the true Light; He enlightens every man coming into the world. Joh 1:10 **He was in the world, and the world came into being through Him, yet the world did not know Him***. Jesus is The Word, therefore Jesus is Jehovah of the Old Testament, *Gen 2:4 These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created in the day that **Jehovah** God was making earth and heavens*.

It was the Son of God, **Jehovah** who came down to visit Abraham and He came to visit him in the form of a man, "*And he lifted up his eyes and looked; and, behold, three men were standing by him".* With Him were two other beings of similar appearance, but we know not who they were.

Jehovah was Jesus, and Jesus was Jehovah, and Jesus means "Jehovah saves", the alpha and omega, the first and the last, *Isa 44:6 So says **Jehovah, the King of Israel**, and his Redeemer, Jehovah of Hosts: **I am the First, and I am the Last**; and there is no God except Me.* Which you can see from the book of Revelation is Christ, *Rev 22:13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the Ending**, the First and the Last**. Rev 22:14 Blessed are the ones doing His commands, that their authority will be over the Tree of Life, and by the gates they may enter into the city. Rev 22:15 But outside are the dogs and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and everyone loving a lie, and making it. Rev 22:16 I, Jesus, sent My angel to testify these things to you over the assemblies. I am the Root and Offspring of David, the bright and morning Star.*

When Jehovah came to dinner with Abraham, He stopped by since His purpose was to visit Sodom*, Gen 18:16 **And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way.** Gen 18:17 And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing*

which I do; Gen 18:18 Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? Gen 18:19 For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. Gen 18:20 And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous;

Jesus stopped by to talk with Abraham while the other two men went on to Sodom. Abraham is not surprised to see Him, suggesting he already knows Him, *Joh 8:56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Joh 8:57 Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham*? Why did Jesus stop off at Abraham's tent before going to Sodom?

He stopped to show Abraham's compassion for the people in that City, at least, the Righteous ones, and He stopped to give Abraham a chance of intercession, *Gen 18:32 And he said, I pray, let not my Lord be angry that I may speak only this time; perhaps ten will be found there. And He said, I will not destroy because of the ten. Gen 18:33 And when Jehovah had left off speaking to Abraham, He was finished. And Abraham returned to his place*. LITV. I think that Abraham could have pressed his luck even further, gradually whittling down the number of righteous people for whom God would not destroy the City, and I think that if He found just one righteous person there, He would spare the City.

This is interesting for it makes Abraham an intercessor for the righteous and by this Abraham sets all Christians the task of interceding before Jesus for the lives of the saints. I wonder how many Christians died because there was no one there to intercede for them?

Jehovah of the Old Testament is often said to be hard and unloving, different from Jesus who is "meek and mild" and loves everybody, ready to forgive. Let me remind you firstly that they are the same person, and secondly that Jesus ministers under that first Covenant, the Old Testament. Jesus is Jehovah, so if you think that God has undergone a spiritual change of heart, then you violate the unchanging nature of God, and you had better think again. There is no difference, no shadow of turning, but the same yesterday, today and forever. If you think Jehovah Jesus has undergone change, you are wrong.

Is Jehovah cruel because He wipes out the people of Sodom and delivers Lot? Is Jesus cruel because He spares Himself and the rest of the children in Bethlehem are killed? Is Jesus cruel because He has appointed a judgement day to pay men for the wages of sin, *Rev 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. Rev 19:12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. Rev 19:13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and* ***his name is called The Word of God***. No Jesus is not cruel, vindictive, nor is He looking for an opportunity to smite man.

He it is who is King of Kings, *1Ti 6:13 I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; 1Ti 6:14 That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: 1Ti 6:15 Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; 1Ti 6:16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.*

Abraham brings out this quality of Jehovah Jesus, **Mercy**, and He shows it on whom he will, *Rom 9:18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth*. He is not obligated to show mercy on anyone, and the people in Sodom, Lot included were all born sinners. Lot had sought the righteous and was granted it, so was he saved from a fiery death, *2Pe 2:6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; 2Pe 2:7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: 2Pe 2:8 (**For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds**;) 2Pe 2:9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:*

Jesus saved Lot because Lot had His righteousness, the righteousness of God, not for anything in himself. Abraham had got on God's wavelength and he too cared for righteousness, and he does not intercede for the wicked. I think that this gives us an insight into the world in which he lived and that the wicked sinners, the people of Sodom, were not just misguided and therefore sinners, but they were profligate, dissolute sinners, beyond redemption.

We in our well meaning way go on travelling the road of life with sinners, and in part we must or else we would be taken up from this world. We give them the benefit of the doubt continually because the alternative is too difficult to bear. And because we fail to see the urgency of the situation, the reality of the state those souls are in, we do them no good, and in consequence we should examine our own souls to see why the are not as Lot's soul, "***For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds***". There comes a time when we waste our breath, *Gen 19:14 And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law*. Judgement must fall.

Abraham had changed from caring about his heir, Isaac, to caring about his heirs. He had gone from bemoaning his offspring, to seeing Jesus, *Gen 15:2 And Abram said, Lord Jehovah, what will You give to me since I am going childless and the son of the inheritance of my house is Eleazar of Damascus? Gen 15:3 And Abram said, Behold! You have given no seed to me; and lo, the son of my house is inheriting of me! Gen 15:4 And behold! The Word of Jehovah came*

to him saying, This one shall not be inheriting. But he that shall come forth out of your own bowels shall be your heir. Gen 15:5 And He brought him outside and said, Look now at the heavens and count the stars, if you are able to count them. And He said to him, So shall your ***seed*** *be.* He had come to see that the righteous persons were his seed, and he saw a world of unrighteousness, in which his nephew and family were the remnant of the faith

Wickedness will be punished, the wages of sin has always been death, *Gen 19:11 And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door. Gen 19:12 And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place: Gen 19:13 For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it. Gen 19:14 And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law. Gen 19:15 And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.*

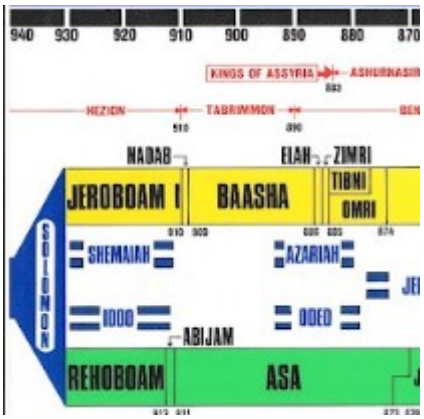
The story (it is not said that it was a parable), of the rich man and Lazarus, shows the compassionate Abraham welcoming the faithful into heaven, *Luk 16:22* ***And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom****: the rich man also died, and was buried; Luk 16:23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Luk 16:24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. Luk 16:25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented*.

Why do we not see Christ welcoming the faithful into heaven? The story Luke recounts is given in the Old Testament, but when Christ has ascended He takes the place of Abraham, as when Stephen dies it is Christ who welcomes him.

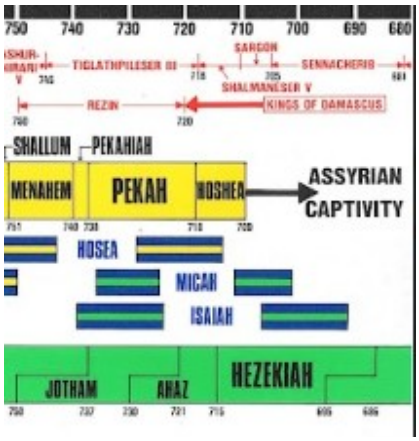
Abraham is a big figure to the Israelites, but just how do we get from Abraham, to the Israelites, and then to the Jews? Initially God deals with individuals but when we get to Abraham He calls out a people, a nation, a chosen people that get their name from a twin grandson of his, Jacob. In the process of time Jacob received a name change to **Israel**, *Gen 32:28 And he said,* ***Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel****: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. Gen 32:29 And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. Gen 32:30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved*. Israel, the Nation, is the fleshly offspring of Abraham, and this is the people that

God delivered from Egyptian captivity and is in part the twelve tribes, the descendents of Jacob or Israel as he became known.

It was some generations later the term Jew was used, *2Ki 16:1 In the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah Ahaz the son of Jotham king of Judah began to reign. 2Ki 16:2 Twenty years old was Ahaz when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, and did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD his God, like David his father. 2Ki 16:3 But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel. 2Ki 16:4 And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.2Ki 16:5 Then Rezin king of Syria and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to war: and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome him. 2Ki 16:6 At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drave* ***the Jews*** *from Elath: and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day.*



You will see that the term Jew is used because the majority of Israel went into captivity, taken by the Assyrians leaving the majority of the people from the tribe of Judah, **יְהוּדִי** = *yeh-hoo-dee',* that is Judaite or Jew , or descendant of Jehudah.



We have seen Jesus as He interacted in the life of Abraham, in the daily life of the man. Abraham did not have a church building, he did not have a Bible, he did not go to an Assembly of God's people every week, he did not engage in regular religious rituals but he did know Jehovah, and he knew Him better than some "Christians" today, because he was obedient to Him, he was obedient to Jesus.

Learn the lesson.

77. Independence Day

Preparatory reading: Exodus Chapter 12

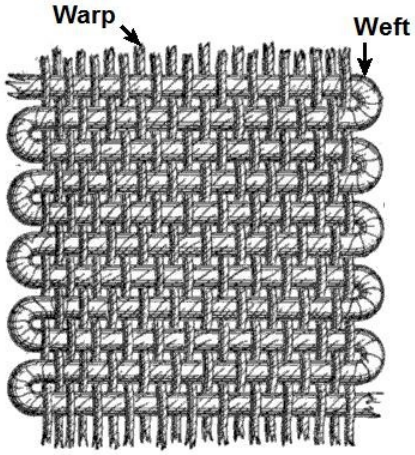
We turn to the event which marked Israel's Independence Day and I remind you of our studies in Luke (191. Preparation of the Passover Luke 22: 7 – 12) when we said,

> If people stopped looking at current events to interpret the history of Israel, they might learn something, for example, an internet search brings up something like this and it is obviously wrong,
>
> Israel's independence was declared on May 14, 1948 — the day when David ben Gurion officially read the Proclamation of the Establishment of the State of Israel. The formation of Israel also meant that the British rule in the country had ended and the citizens were now free. With this, Independence Day was declared a 'state holiday' and is celebrated on the 5th of Iyar.
>
> That obscures the history of the nation of Israel going back to the time of Moses, when God declared Israel's first independence, *Exo 12:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, Exo 12:**2 This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you**. Exo 12:3 Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house*: This event did not occur in 1948, and that 1948 event was a Zionist treaty, moved by David Ben-Gurion, the Executive Head of the World Zionist Organization, Chairman of the Jewish Agency for Palestine. It was not an Israeli treaty.
>
> Israel declared its independent statehood under Jehovah, 3,500 years before this event in 1948 and the Exodus began from Egypt, the land of bondage, to the land that was promised them. It also began with a Passover festival, and the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, *Lev 23:4 These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons. Lev 23:5 **In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD'S passove**r. Lev 23:6 And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. Lev 23:7 In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. Lev 23:8 But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD seven days: in the seventh day is an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.*

The Bible describes these people who obeyed the command to sacrifice the Passover as, **mixed,** *Exo 12:37 And the **children of Israel** journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, **beside children**. Exo 12:38 And **a mixed multitude** went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle*. It was not only Israelites, it was Egyptians, *Lev 24:10 And the son of an Israelitish woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the children of Israel: and this son of the Israelitish woman and a man of Israel strove together in the camp*; The Israelites had contracted mixed marriages while they were in Egypt.

Again by the time of Nehemiah when the Temple and walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt after the captivity, reforms were in place, and they had again to put the mixed multitude away. *Neh 13:1 On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever; Neh 13:2 Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing. Neh 13:3 Now it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the* ***mixed multitude*****.**

The mixed multitude were ereb = עֵרֶב or Arab, as in *1Ki 10:15 Beside that he had of the merchantmen, and of the traffick of the spice merchants, and of all the kings of* ***Arabia****, and of the governors of the country*, as a mixed or mongrel race. But "ereb" is also found 9 times in Leviticus where it is rendered, weft, no not a dog barking but the "weft" or "weft" of a fabric, *Lev 13:51 And he shall look on the plague on the seventh day: if the plague be spread in the garment, either in the warp, or in the weft (עֵרֶב), or in a skin, or in any work that is made of skin; the plague is a fretting leprosy; it is unclean. Lev 13:52 He shall therefore burn that garment, whether warp or weft (עֵרֶב), in woollen or in linen, or any thing of skin, wherein the plague is: for it is a fretting leprosy; it shall be burnt in the fire.*



Warp and Weft are the two basic components of woven fabric. The warp refers to the set of lengthwise yarns that are held taut on a loom, while the weft (also known as the "filling" or "weft") is the set of crosswise yarns that are woven over and under the warp to create the fabric. The warp is the threads that hang down in a loom, running parallel to the bolt of cloth being created, weft (also called the filling) refers to the threads that crisscross the warp, running at right angles to them; they interlace among the warp, over and under, over and under. By extension, weft has come to mean "a basic or essential element or material," according to the dictionary. Clearly, both warp and weft are important to the integrity and strength of a garment. A bolt of cloth lacking either warp or weft simply will not "hang together." The warp and the weft complement each other. Properly united, they form a strong fabric, for example, a carpet, which can take the rough-and-tumble wear of years.

The mixed multitude, ereb, constitutes the weft of the fabric of the nation, and the warp is Israel. At a very early stage in Israel's existence, the gentiles were a part of that nation, making up the weft by which it was held together. If a stranger, dwelt with you, a foreigner, a gentile, he had to become as you to partake in the Passover, *Exo 12:48 And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof*.

What is the relationship of the peoples of the weft to those of the warp? We saw earlier that the defining characteristic of the warp-weft relationship is a sort of unity. A woven cloth is useless without both warp and weft, and it is a relationship of interdependence. The warp-weft metaphor of Exodus Chapter 12 stresses the union of peoples. In fact, the relationship appears almost symbiotic, an "intimate living together of two dissimilar organisms in a mutually beneficial relationship."

But I think that there is more in this metaphor, because I do not think that it is **in this life**, because they are part of the same lump, they are of the same mind, *1Co 5:6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that **a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump**? 1Co 5:7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us*: Yes, they were part of the nation, yes they anticipated the redemption of the Gentiles, yes, they took upon themselves the outward signs of the covenant, circumcision, but that of itself means nothing, since, *Rom 2:29 To be a real Jew you must obey the Law. True circumcision is something that happens deep in your heart, not something done to your body. And besides, you should want praise from God and not from humans*. CEV. It is however a type of the bringing together of people in a unity, Jew and Gentile.

The Israelites were set in one direction and the “mixed multitude” were set at 90 degrees, at right angles to them, in opposition to the direction that the Israelites were going, just like the warp and weft. They were constantly pulling at the Israelites. Warp and weft yarns are prepared separately, and the warp thread is generally the stronger of the two. The warp thread needs to be stronger because it is the thread that is pulled taut on the loom, while the weft thread is woven in and out of the warp threads to create the weave of the fabric. There you have the unequal yoke, and the is never done away with while we are in the flesh and until Jesus takes our hearts and changes us into the spirit, we will be two separate bodies, *Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. Gal 3:29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*.

Warp and weft, may be a figure that illustrates the problems that the people of God take on when they accept the unequal yoke and this is plainly seen today in the churches which are made up of believers and unbelievers who say that they believe in Jesus but come far short of His way of life and beliefs. These people may not be malicious, or overtly undermining the church, but they are a constant drain on the people of God and severely debilitate their witness. Because the churches do not hold their teachings very strongly they are gradually undermined by the “mixed multitude” until their fire goes out, *Rev 3:1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Rev 3:2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which*

remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Rev 3:3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

The Israelites and the "mixed multitude" came out of Egypt together and possibly for the same reason, persecution and exploitation. One should not imagine because the Israelites were persecuted that they were the only ones, for this Pharaoh was a hard man and did not tolerate dissent. He took a lot of Divine persuading to let the people go, 10 plagues precisely.

But why did they need a "Passover" feast **before** they left Egypt? Afterwards, yes, when they had escaped, it would have been appropriate, and I would have thought a celebration of some sort, a joyful occasion, a blowing of trumpets, a time of great rejoicing that they had thrown the yoke of Egypt off of them, but **before** they left, no. This was a memorial feast, to remind them of what they had gone through in Egypt, to be a perpetual reminder of their slavery and oppression, and the Lord's deliverance, *Exo 12:14 And this day shall be unto you for **a memorial**; and ye shall celebrate it as a feast to Jehovah; throughout your generations as an ordinance for ever shall ye celebrate it.*

As a memorial, the Passover was for the people, but as a feast it was a celebration for Jehovah Jesus, *Lev 23:5 In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is **the LORD'S passover***. The Passover was both for the people and how it was also for God, because it was an act of worship unto the Lord. As a celebration to the Lord, the Lord cared about this feast and how it was carried out. God gave precise instructions including the way the meal was prepared and how the meal was eaten.

Exo 12:7 And they shall take of the blood, and put it on the two door-posts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. Exo 12:8 And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; with bitter herbs shall they eat it. Exo 12:9 Ye shall eat none of it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roast with fire; its head with its legs and with its in-wards. Exo 12:10 And ye shall let none of it remain until the morning; and what remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. Exo 12:11 And thus shall ye eat it: your loins shall be girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste; it is Jehovah's passover. Exo 12:12 And I will go through the land of Egypt in that night, and smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am Jehovah.

It is an eternal memorial, or remembrance, fulfilled by Jesus. The Lord's Supper continues the Passover that God commanded His people to practice in perpetuity. We are reminded that we were redeemed from spiritual Egypt (sin and death) His Exodus, *Luk 9:31…….which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem*, through the blood of Christ, the only blood that saves sinners from

God's wrath. Likewise, no one enters into the heavenly land of promise apart from Jesus Christ.

Mark Stromberg in the Christian Library, makes the following excellent point,

> An important part of this festival included the appearance of the people before their sovereign Lord. **All the men had to appear before the Sovereign Lord in Jerusalem**. The men were the covenant heads of each household; as a result it was necessary that each covenant head appear in Jerusalem before Jehovah to remember God's mighty work and to worship Jehovah. The Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread were annual events, whereby the people were called together as a people to appear before Jehovah. In this sense the Passover festival was a corporate event, whereby God's people appeared before Him and they worshipped Him. The nation was being called on to worship God as they appeared before Him corporately at the temple.
>
> The pilgrimage was also an important part of this festival. The pilgrimage was a reminder to the people that they had been sojourners in the wilderness for forty years, but it was also a reminder that they were still travellers. Even after they had entered into the earthly land of Canaan, and settled the land they were still living as pilgrims, because they had not yet entered into the heavenly land of promise. In this way the earthly land of promise was a shadow that pointed them heavenward. And therefore, if they had true faith, then they would understand that they were sojourners like their father Abraham.

Unfortunately, the Passover was forgotten, or at least its significance was, and it lost its significance in the rituals of the nation until Josiah came along, *2Ki 23:21 And the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the passover unto the LORD your God, as it is written in the book of this covenant. 2Ki 23:22* ***Surely there was not holden such a passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah****;..... 2Ch 35:18 And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem*.

From the time that they entered Canaan until near the time that they went into captivity again, they had neglected this memorial.

78. What is Israel?

Preparatory reading: Leviticus Chapter 21

We have seen that the nation of Israel was not racially “pure” and as it went on in time, so it became less pure by the various marriages which were contracted, *Deu 21:10 When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the LORD thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive, Deu 21:11 And seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife; Deu 21:12 Then thou shalt bring her home to thine house; and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails; Deu 21:13 And she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month: and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife. Deu 21:14 And it shall be, if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will; but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her*. The ordinary Israelite could by this law marry anyone except from the proscribed nations.

At the beginning of the nation of Israel, they were pure Israelites, meaning born of their father Israel but by the time of the Judges, they had become more and more a mixed race, *Deu 23:7 Thou shalt not abhor an **Edomite**; for he is thy brother: thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian; because thou wast a stranger in his land. Deu 23:8 The children that are begotten of them shall enter into the congregation of the LORD **in their third generation**.* Israel was open for business and a person not of the proscribed nation could fully enter in to congregation of Israel and enjoy all of the benefits that gave by the third generation, suggesting that by the time the first generation had produced third generation grandchildren, they were fully acceptable in Israel.

The proscribed nations were, *Deu 7:1 When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, **the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites,** seven nations greater and mightier than thou; Deu 7:2 And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: Deu 7:3 **Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son***.

The rules for the Levitical priests were slightly more restricted than the ordinary Israelite*, Lev 21:6 They shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God: for the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and the bread of their God, they do offer: therefore they shall be holy. Lev 21:7 **They shall not take a wife that is a whore, or profane; neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband: for he is holy unto his God.*** For example, they could marry a widow.

The rules for the High priest were even more restrictive, *Lev 21:10 And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes; Lev 21:11 Neither shall he go in to any dead body,*

nor defile himself for his father, or for his mother; Lev 21:12 Neither shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him: I am the LORD. Lev 21:13 And he shall take a wife in her virginity. Lev 21:14 A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, or an harlot, these shall he not take: ***but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife****.* He had to marry a virgin daughter of Israel.

There were other restrictions when it came to marriage, *Deu 23:2 No one born outside of a legal marriage, or any of their descendants for ten generations, can fully belong to the LORD's people. Deu 23:3 No* ***Ammonites*** *or* ***Moabites****, or any of their* ***descendants for ten generations****, can become part of Israel, the LORD's people. Deu 23:4 This is because when you came out of Egypt, they refused to provide you with food and water. And besides, they hired Balaam to put a curse on you*.

You will recall that Ruth, a Moabitess, married into Israel, *Rth 1:1 Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. Rth 1:2 And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehemjudah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. Rth 1:3 And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. Rth 1:4* ***And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth:*** *and they dwelled there about ten years. Rth 1:5 And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband*.

If this rule, "*No* ***Ammonites*** *or* ***Moabites****, or any of their* ***descendants for <u>ten</u> generations****, can become part of Israel, the LORD's people",* then king David, the third generation could not have been allowed to enter Israel. This is intriguing and there are a number of suggestions to explain this. Firstly, and it is the great escape clause, that God can do what He likes even if man must obey the law and this is one such occasion where God gives a free pass on the law.

Another reason might be that it says, "*their* ***descendants for ten generations****, can become part of Israel",* and this is not counting **from** the generation of Ruth but some generations **before** Ruth. The count of ten generations must have begun long before Ruth was born. It is also not from the generation of Israel/Jacob which is 8th from Ruth not 10th, *Mat 1:2 From Abraham to King David, his ancestors were:* ***Abraham****, Isaac, Jacob, Judah and his brothers (Judah's sons were Perez and Zerah, and their mother was Tamar), Hezron; Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon, Salmon, Boaz (his mother was Rahab), Obed (his mother was Ruth), Jesse, and King David.*CEV. It must therefore be from Abraham, 10 generations that Ruth may be legitimately be brought in.

But this seems to do injustice to the text, for Scripture says, *Deu 23:4 Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor*

of Mesopotamia, to curse thee. It said that they were not to enter the congregation because of this which happened long after Abraham.

It could be that the verse only applies to the males and not the females, but it seems this law was in force when they built the second Temple, many years after David, and it wasn't just the men but also the women who were banned, *Ezr 9:1 Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites,* ***the Moabites****, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. Ezr 9:2* ***For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons****: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass*.

I do not know the reason for the generational ban on Moab or why it appears rescinded for Ruth, but the truth might be that Israel had already broken the Covenant with the Lord and it was null and void, *Jer 31:31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Jer 31:32* ***Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:*** *Jer 31:33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. Jer 31:34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more*.

What then is Israel? It may be defined generationally, and as such the Israel of the captivity is different from the Israel of the Exodus, the Israel of the Judges is different from the time of David, and Israel at the time of the kings is different from the time of the captivity. The big change occurred when the nation split into the 10 northern tribes (under Jeroboam) and the one tribe of Judah (under Rehoboam). Although the northern tribes went by the name "Israel", the house of Jeroboam was cut off, *1Ki 13:33 After this thing Jeroboam returned not from his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places: whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places. 1Ki 13:34 And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth*.

The covenant brought each and every Israelite before God to be an example and a Godly nation, and if having placed themselves under the covenant, they turned aside from it, they would be chastised, *Lev 26:14 But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; Lev 26:15 And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my*

commandments, but that ye break my covenant: Lev 26:16 I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. Lev 26:17 And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you. Lev 26:18 And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.

In the diverse multitudes of Israel, there were some who obeyed the covenant and some who did not, and at what stage in national disobedience the people were chastised is not clear. At what percentage of the nation who disobeyed, there was triggered a national chastisement, is unknown. Besides this, we can see that the covenant was both with the nation and also with individuals in that nation. Good people suffered with the bad people when sin appeared, good people went into captivity with the bad.

The bottom line was that individual sins and sinners would be punished, *Eze 18:18 As for his father, because he cruelly oppressed, spoiled his brother by violence, and did that which is not good among his people, lo, even he shall die in his iniquity. Eze 18:19 Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. Eze 18:**20 The soul that sinneth, it shall die**. **The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father**, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. Eze 18:21 But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die*.

Israelites would not suffer for other's sins if they did not do them but they could become collateral damage in other people's sin. Lot was righteous in Sodom but his soul suffered because of the sins of the people, *2Pe 2:7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: 2Pe 2:8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.* Many Christians suffer from the sin of unbelievers, some even dying in wars because of some tin pot dictator, and it still happens today.

The problem was left, how was an individual's sin dealt with, permanently? It was not dealt with under the first covenant, as it says in Hebrew, *Heb 10:3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. Heb 10:4 **For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins***. It was by Jesus, *Heb 10:14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified*. When Christ died He ended the Old Covenant and instituted the New Covenant, *Heb 8:13 Now in saying a new, he hath made the former old. And that which decayeth and groweth old is near its end*. DRB. The New Covenant is sprinkled with His blood.

The New Covenant is solely with individuals not with a nation. The individuals are quarried as individual blocks, *1Pe 2:5 And now you are living stones that are being used to build a spiritual house. You are also a group of holy priests, and with the help of Jesus Christ you will offer sacrifices that please God.* CEV. It is built into a Holy Nation, *1Pe 2:9 But you are God's chosen and special people. You are a group of royal priests and a holy nation. God has brought you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Now you must tell all the wonderful things that he has done*. CEV.

So then, the Israelites were a nation that was composed of a mixture of tribes and peoples, who as a body were chosen to serve God, but the New Nation of Jesus is chosen individually and built into one Holy Nation. The Covenant has changed but how did the Jewish nation transition to a Christian body? *Act 13:43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them,* ***persuaded them to continue in the grace of God***. It was simple and painless because all that they had to do was to "***continue in the grace of God***" by following the teachings of Jesus.

There were no promises given to a disobedient people that rejected the New Covenant. No special dispensation for Jews who did not believe in Jesus and what He taught. No miracle of putting away the New Covenant at the end of the age to let a few people who called themselves "Jews" to resurrect and deny everything Christ taught, and rebuild the Temple and start sacrificing again. No such thing that proceeds from the darkened mind of man's wishful thinking, will make anyone fit for the kingdom of God save Jesus.

Israel, the Jews, anyone who relates to those people from the Old Testament, must consider this, that being born with an earthly connection back to Jacob, does not give them an advantage, *Rom 9:3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Rom 9:4 Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Rom 9:5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. Rom 9:6* ***Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel***: But these only give an earthly advantage.

The spiritual state of the person is paramount and no amount of breeding, learning, law giving can overcome the barrier to sin, except Jesus, *Rom 2:28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: Rom 2:29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God*.

Unless man has the internals fixed he cannot progress in religion, the outward profits nothing, and there is no exception to the rule. As John the Baptist said "the axe is laid to the root of the trees", not the branches, the hidden elements which support man's growth in sin. Jesus cuts off our old roots.

79. 38 Years for Disobedience

Preparatory reading: Numbers Chapters 13 and 14

We should not think that the Israelites were grateful or obedient to the God that had delivered them from Egypt. They were probably motivated by a fear of His power and might, but they did not really trust Him, and the moment, as it were, His back was turned they went their own way. This is often overlooked and we concentrate on the miracle of deliverance and do not look upon the calamity that killed them.

This story begins with Moses sending out spy's into Canaan, which occurred in the second year of the Exodus, two years after the people came out of Egypt. This exercise was to give the people a good report of the land and encourage confidence in going up against it, *Num 13:26 And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed them the fruit of the land.* But instead of encouragement they brought back discouragement, *Num 13:31 But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. Num 13:32 And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature*.

This disappointing appraisal of the land by the spy's, caused divine anger, because Israel had seen the people of the land as being bigger than the Lord. It was an insult but it showed what the people thought of their God. Only two of the heads of the tribes of Israel believed God, Joshua or **Jesus** as the LXX records him and Caleb, "***ἀλλ᾽ ἢ Χαλεβ υἱὸς Ιεφοννη καὶ Ἰησοῦς ὁ τοῦ Ναυη"***. Why the AV is so ambivalent about rendering Joshua as Jesus I do not know, but we will render the name **Jesus** so as to be consistent.

Note the tribes from which the two dissenters come from, Joshua was from the tribe of **Ephraim**, and Caleb was from the tribe of **Judah**. These are the tribes who contest the land when Solomon dies. Then Rehoboam is king of Judah and Jeroboam king of Ephraim and her confederates. These tribes play a major role in Israel's history.

God pronounces the death sentence upon the rebels, *Num 14:30 Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein, save **Caleb** the son of Jephunneh, and **Jesus** the son of Nun. Num 14:31 But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. Num 14:32 But as for you, your*

carcases, they shall fall in this wilderness. Num 14:33 And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcases be wasted in the wilderness. Num 14:34 After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise. Num 14:35 I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.

There were two consequences following this act of disobedience, firstly, *Num 32:13 And the LORD'S anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them **wander in the wilderness forty years**, until all the generation, that had done evil in the sight of the LORD, was consumed*. Seeing that the men went out in the second year, *Num 10:11 And it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony.* That meant that the people were sentenced to an **additional 38 years wandering** in the wilderness, making the total time spent in the wilderness, 40 years, *Num 14:34 After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even **forty years**, and ye shall know my breach of promise.*

The second and saddest thing is, *Num 14:35 I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness **they shall be consumed, and there they shall die***. The scale of this tragedy is often overlooked, because the number is so large, and I reckon the number from this Scripture*, Exo 38:26 A bekah for every man, that is, half a shekel, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for every one that went to be numbered, from twenty years old and upward, for **six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty men***. That's right, **603,550** perished in the wilderness, so only the younger men who were not part of Israel's army and those born in the wilderness, survived.

There is an interesting Talmudic tradition relating to this,

> There is a dramatic story in the Palestinian Talmud (Ta'anit 9:11, 69c) that teaches that when the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, every year on the night of the 9th of Av (between July and August), the national day of mourning, each member of the Exodus generation dug a grave and slept in it. The following morning, some 15,000 individuals were found dead in their graves. According to tradition, this harrowing ritual was repeated annually for forty years, until the original 600,000 Israelites who left Egypt, those who doubted that they could attain the Promised Land, finally died off. Only on the day on which all of the people of the younger generation rose from their graves was the community of Israel finally worthy of inheriting the Land. Triumph and tragedy were thus intertwined.

Over the space of 38 years there was genocide of the men of Israel, a deliberate killing by God. They would gradually die off at the rate of over 15,000 a year, or 43 people every day on average. This was a constant reminder of God's displeasure with them for not believing in Him, for not accepting His word. The women it appears did not suffer this fate, *Num 32:10 And the LORD'S anger was kindled the same time, and he sware, saying, Num 32:11 Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob; because they have not wholly followed me: Num 32:12 Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Joshua the son of Nun: for they have wholly followed the LORD*.

Of course the smug church thinks that they are far superior to the Israelites and they could not possibly undergo such treatment and that they would never be forbidden entry into the Promised Land, but they are mistaken, *1Co 10:7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. 1Co 10:8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. 1Co 10:9 Neither let us tempt* ***Christ****, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. 1Co 10:10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. 1Co 10:11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. 1Co 10:12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*.

This was written for us also, for me and you, it wasn't just a good story to entertain us, it is for us, "*upon whom the ends of the world are come*", an object lesson in obedience, in case we should get the notion that having come to Jesus, we can thenceforth do whatever we please. The churches are full of such people, well meaning souls, but they do not consider obedience to God a very important thing, having obtained their objective of deliverance. We fail to see that much more than "coming out of Egypt" is required of us if we are to use the name "Christian.

It seems unfair that a few men should, by their word, damn a whole generation to failure. But the people were happy to "see" through their leaders eyes, to look a their inheritance as being too formidable to take because of the giants, *Num 13:33 And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.* I have said it before, "Don't look at how big the problem is, look at how big your God is compared to the problem".

This is another issue that we encounter in our walk of faith. It is the reliance upon men, the awe of the specialist, the premiership of the manipulator of words, the high priest of religion, but where will they be on the great day of Judgement? Well, they will be in exactly the same queue as you, waiting their turn, answering for their own lives. Do you and I really have to answer for our lives lived and theirs also? When we follow a man, or his denomination, we are in danger, unless

he is following Jesus, and we only find out that he is following Jesus if he is following Scripture. Prove all things don't just take them as truth. Those Israelites believed a lot of weak short sighted men. They were in consequence punished with them. **600, 000 people died, the whole generation died, all the men who came out of Egypt died, and in consequence the Exodus was a failure, except for the next generation**.

The people lived for all that time by Divine providence despite being gradually killed off, *Deu 8:4 Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years. Deu 8:5 Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee*. The people must have seen that their garments did not wear out but their bodies did and no doubt many came to "repent" that decision not to go up and take Canaan. It must have been a subject of deep concern to those Israelites and no matter how much sorrow they showed for that lapse in belief, it was not going to change the Lord's mind, and they would by their death prove God's word true. As time went on and the dying continued, those of the generation of men of war, those who came out of Egypt, were nothing more than dead men walking.

The new army was uncircumcised and so having crossed the Jordan, the conquest was paused to complete this sign of the covenant, *Jos 5:4 And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: All the people that came out of Egypt, that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way, after they came out of Egypt. Jos 5:5 Now all the people that came out were circumcised: but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised. Jos 5:6 For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: unto whom the LORD sware that he would not shew them the land, which the LORD sware unto their fathers that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey. Jos 5:7 And their children, whom he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised: for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way. Jos 5:8 And it came to pass, when they had done circumcising all the people, that they abode in their places in the camp, till they were whole. Jos 5:9 And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day*.

The right of circumcision was put on hold, perhaps because it was seemly for this new generation to have a new beginning, and start again with honouring the covenant that had been made right back to the time of Abraham. With this done, the people were ready to enter the land, which is noted in Stephen's speech at his trial, and he reminds the Jewish leaders of their heritage, Jesus led them out, *Act 7:45 Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David; Act 7:46*

Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. Jesus of the Old Tesrament appears in many forms, and here He appears in the life of a man who has the same name.

The nation of Israel was going to go through many "boom and bust" cycles over the following years. The pull of the world was too great and they would not listen to the Judges that God raised up, *Jdg 2:16 Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. Jdg 2:17 And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so. Jdg 2:18 And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. Jdg 2:19 And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way. Jdg 2:20 And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice; Jdg 2:21 I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died: Jdg 2:22 That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not. Jdg 2:23 Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua*.

Therefore, every generation of Israelites went through this "see-saw" of faith, and every time the people failed God. The faithful nation turned out to be unfaithful, *Jdg 5:31 So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years*.

There are three additional points that I would like to cover, the first relates to the 38 years for disobedience, *Joh 5:2 Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. Joh 5:3 In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. Joh 5:4 For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. Joh 5:5 And a certain man was there, which had* ***an infirmity thirty and eight year****.*

Why mention 38 years? It is a good exercise to go through the whole of Scripture to find the uses and meaning of a word, and here we have the same expression as in, *Deu 2:14 And the space in which we came from Kadeshbarnea, until we were come over the brook Zered, was* ***thirty and eight years****; until all the*

generation of the men of war were wasted out from among the host, as the LORD sware unto them. I think that there is an overlay of these events, and that the man among the many "*impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered*", was typical of the impotent nation of Israel. It is only in Christ that you can be healed of impotence, spiritual impotence, and waiting for an angel is like waiting for a lottery win.

The second point is that every one has failed the temptation test, *Exo 16:4 Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day,* ***that I may prove them****, whether they will walk in my law, or no*. Every man that is except Jesus, *Luk 4:1 And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Luk 4:2 Being forty days* ***tempted*** *of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered*. Jesus only overcame temptations, and only He in your life will do the same for you.

The third point is made with regard to the spy's failure to take the land. There were two men who did believe that they could go in, but they were delayed by the disobedient men for 38 years. The names of the spy's are recorded, and the two who believed God are recorded as to their tribes, *Num 13:3 And Moses by the commandment of the LORD sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men were heads of the children of Israel…..Num 13:6 Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh…..Num 13:8 Of the tribe of Ephraim, Oshea the son of Nun*.

These are the very tribes who were singled out by Jacob. There was **Judah who had the genealogy** and **Ephraim who had the birthright**. Caleb from the house of Judah had the genealogy and Jesus/Joshua from the house of Ephraim had the birthright. The two tribes would split into Judah and Israel at the death of King Solomon. They would be reunited in Christ (Eze 37 :15 ff).

Perhaps keeping the women alive did some good, for they would have continuously reminded their son's of the fate of their fathers.

80. The Law of Moses

Preparatory reading: Romans Chapters 7 and 8.

Why did the people of Israel get given the Law at the hands of Moses? They had the promises of God that they would be a great nation, the promise stands but why would the Law be added as an afterthought or as an additional condition, which was not told to Abraham's seed until long after he was dead? This leads us to another parallel strand of the covenant that God made with Abraham.

Disobedience, the bane of Israel was met square on with the Law, *Rom 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Rom 5:20* ***Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound****. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: Rom 5:21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.* The Law was given because of sin.

As Paul says in Galatians, "the Law" was an add on because of the transgression or sin, *Gal 3:19 Wherefore then serveth the law?* ***It was added because of transgressions****, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator*. Let us look at some other translations, *Gal 3:19 What, then, was the purpose of the Law?* ***It was added in order to show what wrongdoing is,*** *and it was meant to last until the coming of Abraham's descendant, to whom the promise was made. The Law was handed down by angels, with a man acting as a go-between.* GNB……*Gal 3:19 What then is the law?* ***It was an addition made because of sin****, till the coming of the seed to whom the undertaking had been given; and it was ordered through angels by the hand of a go-between*. BBE.

Paul speaking of the Law says that the Law brought sin alive, although the Law was not sinful in consequence, it was Holy, *Rom 7:9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. Rom 7:10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. Rom 7:11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Rom 7:12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Rom 7:13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful*.

How did the Law do that and what was the Law? The Law "revived" sin, it bought it back to life, it brought the consciousness of sin to bear on the individual, and it so provokes the soul that it produces death, "F*or sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me".* It makes sin to be exceeding sinful. It amplifies the wrong doing, it magnifies it, so that what seemed to be alright was not alright when seen under the microscope of the Law. As the image of what we are, is brought into focus, and brought closer, we see ourselves as utterly rotten, crawling with stinking vermin, rotten inside and out, and no wonder God does not like our company.

We need to be washed of our filthy ways, but you will see that the Law does not even lend a hand or lift a finger to help the poor sinner, *Rom 7:10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. Rom 7:11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.* It piles sin on sin until the poor exhausted sinner is near dead, until he cries

in extremis, *Rom 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

But we have not defined “Law” yet, so what is it? It is the system of rules which a particular community recognizes as regulating the actions of its members and which it may enforce by the imposition of penalties. What are the laws? They consist firstly of the 10 law words, or 10 commands, given by God, and start with the words, *Exo 20:2 I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Exo 20:3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me*. Jehovah Jesus speaks His first law words to the people of Israel.

The Mosaic Law refers to the laws God gave Moses on Mount Sinai after releasing the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. They include the Ten Commandments, ordinances for living in society, **Civil laws**, and regulations for worship (requirements for priests, sacrifices, feasts, and the temple), Ceremonial laws. The Bible gives at least four reasons God gave the Mosaic Law to His people: for their own good, to reveal Himself to them, to set them apart in order to reveal Himself to others, and to reveal humanity's need for a Saviour.

That first Command holds the rest of the commands together, and it is valid for all time. It says to the Christian, if I have brought you out of bondage, you should not have anything that takes you away from me. It is saying, *Luk 14:26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Luk 14:27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple*. This is the cost of being a follower of Jesus.

Nothing can replace Him or be substitute for Him. No, not your family, your hobbies and your pastimes which substitute for Him, your appetites for exotic holidays which come and go and leave just empty memories, those people who you call friends but occupy your conversations with vanity, the nostalgia with which you view the past, looking back over your shoulder with longing instead of looking to the future with Jesus. The emptiness which we fill with things that do not profit us, is the same emptiness that all generations feel, *Ecc 1:2 Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. Ecc 1:3 What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?* It is all emptiness, vanity, without Jesus, and that is not so much a command that He utters but an eternal truth to give our life meaning and substance, ***Exo 20:3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me***.

The 10 commands are the framework which opens up into the individual case laws which spring from them. Take for example the 6th command rendered, *Exo 20:13 Thou shalt not kill*. What does it mean, to kill, רָצַח = râtsach? That word has to be explored through all its Biblical uses to find out just what it means, and then look at the individual circumstances, or **cases**, to get a clearer view, for example, *Num 35:10 “Speak to the Israelites and tell them: When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, Num 35:11 designate cities to serve as your*

cities of refuge, ***so that a person who kills someone unintentionally*** *may flee there*. BSB. So you could kill and escape because it happened unintentionally. Then when you have done all of that you need to see whether there are circumstances which further modify it, *Mat 5:21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: Mat 5:22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.*

It is a legal minefield, and no wonder that the Jewish people became obsessed with doing things right, to the extent that service to God became secondary to doing the Law. The Law of Moses was all consuming, 613 laws, and that still did not answer all their questions and doubts as to the meaning of the law. They needed more information, so they invented it, and they wrote down additional laws in a Mishnah. The Mishnah is a written record of the Oral Laws categorized by subjects. Over the course of four centuries, the Mishnah expanded into the Talmud that recorded the many interpretations of the Mishnah text by hundreds of Rabbis.

But this was not all the Law. Sometimes the “Law” is arbitrarily sub-divided into Civil and Ceremonial Law, but the lines are often blurred. The Ceremonial Law governed how God was to be approached and worshipped in the Old Testament, and the Civil Law contained both the civil and criminal laws for the Old Testament nation of Israel. The Law comprised, how God expected to be treated, how He expected other people to be treated, as summed up by Jesus, *Mat 22:37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. Mat 22:38 This is the first and great commandment. Mat 22:39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Mat 22:40 On these two commandments* ***hang all the law*** *and the prophets*.

What is termed ceremonial Law, covers the Tabernacle of Moses, the priesthood and the offerings, dealt with in a later chapter. Before I do that I wish to go back and look at the verse that said, *Gal 3:19 What, then, was the purpose of the Law? It was added in order to show what wrongdoing is, and* ***it was meant to last until the coming of Abraham's descendant, to whom the promise was made.*** That tells us that the Law was an interim measure until the coming “seed” was revealed. It was given until “the seed” should come to whom the promise was made.

The Law did not exist as part of a covenant before the time of Moses. But Laws existed before the time of Moses, for example on killing, clean and unclean animals, sacrificing clean animals, not eating blood, hetero-sexual monogamy, circumcision, adultery, and these show that people were not “lawless”, they had a standard of morality, but it was not codified. Moses brought Israel under a common code, a singular standard and the nation agreed to be ruled by this. All

societies have a form of law, and this goes back to God, but if you do not acknowledge a God, your house of cards is blown away. If there is no God then you can do whatever you like, and there is no moral absolute, and you are just as right as the next person.

As we said, the Law did not lift a finger to help the poor sinner, it burdened him. The law did what the lawyers of Jesus day did, *Luk 11:46 And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for* ***ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your*** *fingers*. It put grievous burdens upon the shoulders of men and stood back watching them struggle. It made them cry*, Rom 7:24* ***O wretched man that I am****! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

And then comes this statement, offering relief from the weight of sin, *Rom 7:25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. Rom 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

This shows the dichotomy of body and spirit. The body, the flesh is a slave to the sinful nature but the spirit is free, not under the law, *Gal 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. Gal 5:17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. Gal 5:18* ***But if ye be led of the Spirit, <u>ye are not under the law</u>.*** *Gal 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Gal 5:20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Gal 5:21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*.

All the time of Moses, the time that the Israelites were under Law, we observe that the flesh in man was dominant and resulted in the people having a hard heart. Moses therefore made concessions to the “hard heart”, *Mat 19:7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? Mat 19:8 He saith unto them,* ***Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wive****s: but from the beginning it was not so. Mat 19:9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.* Christ shows that the higher Law, the Law of the spirit made no such concessions.

So in the New Testament, the Christian is not under the Law of Moses, but under the Spirit of life in Christ, *Rom 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Rom 8:2* ***For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made***

me free from the law of sin and death. *Rom 8:3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: Rom 8:4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Rom 8:5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.*

If a man is in Christ, he is renewed, *2Co 5:17* ***Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature****: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 2Co 5:18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation*;

The salvation offered in Jesus is the deliverance from the wretchedness of sin brought about by the Law and removed by the death of Jesus. If you are "in Him", by seeking repentance, by virtue of His death and resurrection, by faith that is by trust in Him, you are free, *1Co 9:21 To those who do not have the Law, I became like a man who does not have the Law in order to win those who do not have the Law. However, I am not free from God's Law, but I'm subject to the Messiah's law.* ISV.

The bottom line is, *Rom 10:4 For Messiah is the goal of the Torah as a means to righteousness for everyone who keeps trusting*. TLV.

81. The Difference in Preaching Between the Covenants

Preparatory reading: Exodus Chapter 20

We have seen that the Law of Moses regulated the Nation and that it had both Civil and Religious laws. There was no area that was out of the control of God and it was up to the Nation to comply with the Law of God or else they were in danger of breaking the Covenant with God and being outcast. Although it was called the Law of Moses, he did not think it all out. In reality the Law came from God, and Moses was just a handler of God's law.

Of course we use the term "God" to mean our "God", the personal God that each and every man has manufactured, irrespective of what the true God is. I heard a young man justifying his homosexuality and his "Christianity" as being alright in the eyes of "god", because "god" had made him like this and "god" wouldn't do this to him because "god" is good and so it must be alright. His "god" is not my God but a delusion.

The God of the Bible makes homosexuality a punishment for not retaining the true knowledge of God in the mind, it is, *Rom 1:26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: Rom 1:27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural*

*use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. Rom 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenien*t.

I am sure that my version of who God is differs so much from other so called "Christians" in this day and age that we are not talking about the same person. So to use the generic term "god", is to use a blanket term which covers all people's views of the deity, but certainly does not mean the same Person to each one. Before we go on to speak of God's laws, God's teachings, God's people, we have to define just who it is that encapsulates the concept of God.

The declaration of His being is given in Exodus, *Exo 20:2 I am the LORD your God, the one who brought you out of Egypt where you were slaves. Exo 20:3 Do not worship any god except me. Exo 20:4 Do not make idols that look like anything in the sky or on earth or in the ocean under the earth. Exo 20:5 Don't bow down and worship idols. I am the LORD your God, and I demand all your love. If you reject me, I will punish your families for three or four generations. Exo 20:6 But if you love me and obey my laws, I will be kind to your families for thousands of generations*.

His job description is written over all the Scriptures, perhaps in His discourse to Job, is found the best statement of His works, long before man came along. He is who He says He is, and all of the information about Him is found in the Scripture*, Exo 3:14 And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.* Whatever you feel or think about God is lies, if it does not agree with the Scriptures.

We turn from serving God under the First Covenant, to serving Him under the New Covenant. This service or worship is regulated by the word of God, the same word that describes what God is like. If you don't believe the word of God with respect to what it says about God or service to Him, then STOP right here, because I have nothing more to say to you, except repent.

In the Old Testament the teachers, like Moses, had to show the people how to walk with their God, *Exo 18:20 And thou shalt* ***teach them ordinances and laws****, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. Exo 18:21 Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens*: Any subject was suitable for the people of God as they lived under a Theocracy, a rule of God, and this included how they were to behave to certain nations.

The New Testament teachers are concerned with the rule of Jesus, Jehovah Jesus, and it has taken a turn "upward", to the spiritual realm, the heavenlies. The Law

as it is expounded by Jesus has a more restrictions than under Moses, for example, the lex talionis, the laws limiting the nature of retaliation against an offender, *Mat 5:38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: Mat 5:39* ***But I say unto you****, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. Mat 5:40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. Mat 5:41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Mat 5:42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away*. An eye for an eye, came from a very hard heart, but Jesus shows that we don't resist evil, and we must let the matter go. This letting go of the earthly things, which shall turn out to be worthless anyway, is what makes a man heavenly.

There was in the Old Testament Israelite, something that made compliance with the laws difficult, namely the hard heart, *Mar 10:4 And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. Mar 10:5 And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. Mar 10:6 But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. Mar 10:7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife.* Retaliation was equally from the operation of a hard heart.

There is a similar attitude among some "Christians", like the ones from Westboro Baptist Church, which carries out daily picketing in Topeka, Kansas, and travels nationally to picket the funerals of gay victims of murder, or gay-bashing, as well as those of people who have died from complications related to AIDS. They do not witness Christ to the individuals but only speak on their demise, and exercise their fleshly carnal nature, after the fact that the person is dead. "AIDS cures fags" is hardly a sensitive comment to the bereaved, and not something I think Jesus would say, and I attribute this to a hard heart.

It would seem that these sort of people think that America is like Israel, a nation in Covenant with God. They are not, and **no nation on earth** is in Covenant with God now, not even old Israel, *Jer 31:31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Jer 31:32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt;* ***which my covenant they brake****, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: Jer 31:33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. Jer 31:34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more*. The new covenant is not with an earthly nation.

There is a difference between upholding Gods Laws in a nation, a geographic country that has covenanted as a people with God, like Israel, and a community, such as Christians, with “no country here below”, which looks for a heavenly kingdom and is under the law of Christ. Christians do preach Christ to the lost, but then it teaches those who accept Jesus, to become disciples. For those who reject Jesus, the church has no sanctions.

The way Christianity functions and deals with other Christians is different to the way the nation of Israel dealt with its citizens. For a start, the Christian society does not exercise the power of the state, it lives within the state, such as the “Government of the United Kingdom”, but the church is only bound to serve the laws of the state where it does not conflict with God’s laws, *Act 4:18 So they called the two apostles back in and told them that they must never, for any reason, teach anything about the name of Jesus. Act 4:19 Peter and John answered****, "Do you think God wants us to obey you or to obey him?*** *Act 4:20 We cannot keep quiet about what we have seen and heard."* CEV. If you disobey the state because it does not agree with the laws of God, you must suffer the consequences of your actions, even if you are right.

Paul lived in a state, the Roman Empire, and was subject to those laws of Rome, and that was generally supportive of God’s law, and he says, *Rom 13:1 Obey the rulers who have authority over you. Only God can give authority to anyone, and he puts these rulers in their places of power. Rom 13:2* ***People who oppose the authorities are opposing what God has done, and they will be punished****. Rom 13:3 Rulers are a threat to evil people, not to good people. There is no need to be afraid of the authorities. Just do right, and they will praise you for it. Rom 13:4 After all, they are God's servants, and it is their duty to help you. If you do something wrong, you ought to be afraid, because these rulers have the right to punish you. They are God's servants who punish criminals to show how angry God is*. CEV. Paul sees the criminals getting their just deserts through the power of the state. If the state exceeds its mandate, you can choose not to obey and again take the consequences. Both Jesus and Paul do not see it as their business to get rid of the Roman empire, *Joh 18:35 Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? Joh 18:36 Jesus answered,* ***My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world****, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence*.

As Christians, we exist under the umbrella of the state, for better or for worse, but within our own community, the church, we settle matters internally, and we do not go to the world, or to the state, as unbelievers, *1Co 6:1 When one of you has a complaint against another, do you take your complaint to a court of sinners? Or do you take it to God's people? 1Co 6:2 Don't you know that God's people will judge the world? And if you are going to judge the world, can't you settle small problems? 1Co 6:3* ***Don't you know that we will judge angels? And if that is so, we can surely judge everyday matters.*** *1Co 6:4* ***Why do you take everyday complaints to judges who are not respected by the***

church? *1Co 6:5 I say this to your shame. Aren't any of you wise enough to act as a judge between one follower and another? 1Co 6:6 Why should one of you take another to be tried by unbelievers? 1Co 6:7 When one of you takes another to court, all of you lose. It would be better to let yourselves be cheated and robbed.* CEV.

Should we seek the state for anything? Well that depends. You are making forced contributions to its wealth and so I do not see the wrong in taking benefits from it, providing it is clean and legitimate, but there is an uneasy relationship with it and its people. We must never forget that they are children of the devil, *1Jn 3:10 In this the children of God are manifest, and* ***the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother***. In our distinctive position, we are to be as harmless as doves and wise as serpents, as Paul says, *Rom 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Rom 12:20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Rom 12:21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good*.

The state will take care of itself, and we Christians will take care of the kingdom, *Mat 28:18 And Jesus coming up spoke to them, saying, All power has been given me in heaven and upon earth. Mat 28:19 Go therefore and* ***make disciples*** *of all the nations,* ***baptising them*** *to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; Mat 28:20* ***teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have enjoined you****. And behold, *I* am with you all the days, until the completion of the age.* Darby.

1. Disciple
2. Baptise
3. Observe

The order today is somewhat different,

1. Commit
2. Go to Church
3. Get involved with the world

Discipleship is out, **baptism** is take it or leave it, and we don’t know what we are supposed to **observe** because we don’t believe or read the Bible, and tradition has replaced the faith. But if we go back to the principals that Jesus left us, the purpose of a ministry unfolds, and those 3 things, **Discipleship**, **Baptism**, and **Observing** the teachings of Christ, are the principles, and those three things are what Jesus sees as the essentials to getting you and me to heaven. Doing the law doesn’t get you there, *Gal 2:16* ***Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ****, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. Gal 2:17 But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves*

also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. Gal 2:18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

Doing the law, good works, going to church, getting involved with the world will not get you to heaven. You must get yourself right with God, and this is the thrust of the Christian ministry. It's all very well having sermons that fill you with knowledge, or entertain you, or fill an hour a week, but you will be eternally sorry, literally, if you miss the entrance to heaven, because you did not get taught to observe Jesus teachings. I have no doubt at all the hell is filled with clever intellectuals who knew all the major doctrines of the churches, but did not get to know Jesus.

The Christian should be occupied with knowing Jesus. These are Spurgeon's first words during the first sermon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on March 25, 1861,

> I would propose that the subject of the ministry of this house, as long as this platform shall stand, and as long as this house shall be frequented by worshippers, shall be the person of Jesus Christ. I am never ashamed to avow myself a Calvinist, although I claim to be rather a Calvinist according to Calvin, than after the modern debased fashion. I do not hesitate to take the name of Baptist. You have there (pointing to the baptistery) substantial evidence that I am not ashamed of that ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ; but if I am asked to say what is my creed, I think I must reply: "It is Jesus Christ."
>
> My venerable predecessor, Dr. Gill, has left a body of divinity admirable and excellent in its way; but the body of divinity to which I would pin and bind myself for ever, God helping me, is not his system of divinity or any other human treatise, but Christ Jesus, who is the sum and substance of the gospel; who is in himself all theology, the incarnation of every precious truth, the all-glorious personal embodiment of the way, the truth, and the life. Amen, and amen.

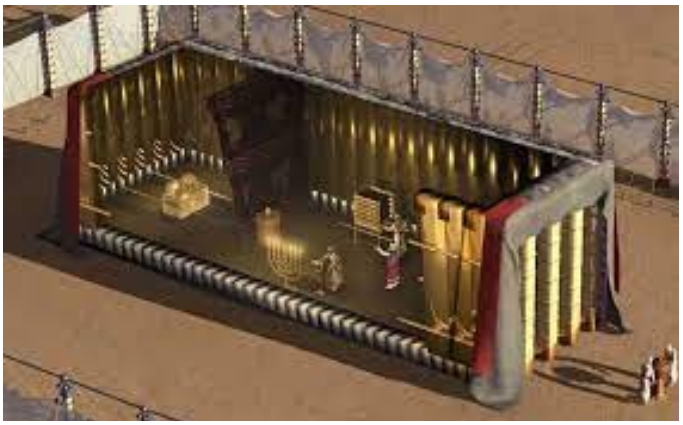
Jesus alone changes people from the root to the branch, and that is by His spirit and word we are given eternal life, *1Jn 5:20 We know that Jesus Christ the Son of God has come and has shown us the true God. And because of Jesus, we now belong to the true God who gives eternal life*. CEV.

82. The Ceremonial Law

Preparatory reading: Exodus Chapter 25, Leviticus Chapter 16 and Hebrews Chapter 9.

The first thing to note when God commanded the Israelites to build the Tent or Tabernacle of the meeting, was this phrase, *Exo 25:40 And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount*. It was of no use building something that would be different from God's plan because it would not be acceptable.

When building the church, Paul says, *1Pe 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*. The New Testament "building" is spiritual and the architect is Jesus, *Col 1:24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh* ***for his body's sake, which is the church***: So you would suppose that the church is built precisely as God wants, because the members are God's people and they do not disobey Him? Well there is a difference between Jesus church and men's church, and that difference is seen in the structure of that spiritual building. Whether the building conforms to the "building regulations" as published by Jesus, or whether the regulations follow in part or not at all, and if the building analogy holds good, the man made buildings will be flattened and not fit for purpose.



The Tabernacle/tent served as a meeting point with Jehovah Jesus, *Exo 29:42 It shall be a continual burnt-offering throughout your generations* ***at the entrance of the tent of meeting before Jehovah, where I will meet with you, to speak there with thee***. *Exo 29:43 And there will I meet with the children of Israel; and it shall be hallowed by my glory. Exo 29:44 And I will hallow the tent of meeting, and the altar; and I will hallow Aaron and his sons, that they may serve me as priests. Exo 29:45 And I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel, and will be their God. Exo 29:46 And they shall know that I am Jehovah their God, who have brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, to dwell in their midst: I am Jehovah their God. that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the LORD their God*. Darby.

The Tabernacle consisted of many things, and a rough guide to its component parts is given by the writer to the Hebrews, *Heb 9:1 The first therefore also indeed had ordinances of service, and the sanctuary, a worldly one. Heb 9:2 For a tabernacle was set up; the first, in which were both the candlestick and the table and the exposition of the loaves, which is called Holy; Heb 9:3 but after the second veil a tabernacle which is called Holy of holies, Heb 9:4 having a golden censer, and the ark of the covenant, covered round in every part with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, and the rod of Aaron that had sprouted, and the tables of the covenant; Heb 9:5 and above over it the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat; concerning which it is not now the*

time to speak in detail. Darby. It was called the first (v1) because there were others to come.

This Tabernacle had two parts (v2), the first called “the Holy place” and the second called the “Holy of Holies”. The first part contained the “Jewish” menorah, or lampstand with it seven branches, the table of bread and wine and incense altar. The Scripture does not mention “wine” but says that the table had bowls “*with which to pour out*”, so I am assuming these objects are for wine, *Exo 25:28 And thou shalt make the staves of acacia-wood, and overlay them with gold; and the table shall be carried upon them. Exo 25:29 And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and cups thereof, and goblets thereof, and bowls thereof, with which to pour out: of pure gold shalt thou make them. Exo 25:30 And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before me continually*. Darby.

The second part, the Holy of Holies had a veil separating it from the Holy place. Inside of this was the Mercyseat, or capporeth, with Cherubim overshadowing the Mercyseat. Inside of this were placed three items, a pot of manna, the bread they ate in the wilderness, Aaron’s rod that budded, a symbol of his priestly authority, and the tables of the Law of Moses.

I do not intend to go into every detail of the furnishings of the Tabernacle here, only to give you a way of looking at some of the items in it. The first is the Mercyseat and the second is the seven branched Candlestick. One should not think that this furniture has been designed without purpose and that God filled this space with arbitrary designs, He did not. There are as I will show, portraits of His son Jesus, in every place, showing Him in different views, different lights and on different occasions.

Here is the first picture of Jesus as the Mercyseat, Exo 25:10 And they shall make an ark of acacia-wood; two cubits and a half the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. Exo 25:11 And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold: inside and outside shalt thou overlay it; and shalt make upon it a border of gold round about..... Exo 25:17 And thou shalt make a mercy-seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. Exo 25:18 And thou shalt make two cherubim of gold; of beaten work shalt thou make them, at the two ends of the mercy-seat. Darby.

This was the communication hub, the place where God spoke to Aaron, to give him the law, the Centrum of God’s contact with us, *Exo 25:22 And there I will meet with thee, **and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat**, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel*.

The high priest came into the Holy of Holies, once a year, on the Day of Atonement, yom kippur, with the blood of a bullock which he sprinkled on the Mercyseat, *Lev 16:2 and Jehovah said to Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the sanctuary inside the veil before the mercy-seat which is upon the ark, that he die not; for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy-seat. Lev 16:3 In this manner shall Aaron come into the sanctuary: with a young bullock for a sin-offering, and a ram for a burnt-offering.....Lev 16:14 And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle with his finger upon the front of the mercy-seat eastward; and before the mercy-seat shall he sprinkle of the blood seven times with his finger*. Darby. The New Testament says, *Rom 5:11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our* ***Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement***. The high priest enacted the role of Jesus as the reconciler, the bullock enacted the role of Jesus the sacrifice and the Mercyseat enacted Jesus the Mediator between God and man.

In the New Testament Paul describes the Mercyseat in Romans, *Rom 3:24 being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in* ***Christ Jesus****; Rom 3:25* ***whom God has set forth a mercy-seat****, through faith in his blood, for the shewing forth of his righteousness, in respect of the passing by the sins that had taken place before, through the forbearance of God; Rom 3:26 for the shewing forth of his righteousness in the present time, so that he should be just, and justify him that is of the faith of Jesus*. He says that Jesus is the Mercyseat, "***Christ Jesus whom God has set forth a mercy-seat***". The Greek word ἱλαστήριον, Mercyseat, used in Romans, is the same word used for Mercy-seat in the Old Testament LXX (Greek version). Jesus is the Mercyseat.

Why should Jesus disguise Himself? Because they were not ready for the reality of Jesus, *Gal 4:1 Children who are under age are no better off than slaves, even though everything their parents own will someday be theirs. Gal 4:2 This is because children are placed in the care of guardians and teachers until the time their parents have set. Gal 4:3 That is how it was with us. We were like children ruled by the powers of this world. Gal 4:4 But when the time was right, God sent his Son, and a woman gave birth to him. His Son obeyed the Law, Gal 4:5 so he could set us free from the Law, and we could become God's children*. CEV.

The Tabernacle had not been fully opened to the masses, *Heb 9:8 the Holy Spirit shewing this, that the way of the holy of holies has not yet been made manifest while as yet the first tabernacle has its standing; Heb 9:9 the which is an image for the present time, according to which both gifts and sacrifices, unable to perfect as to conscience him that worshipped, are offered, Heb 9:10 consisting only of meats and drinks and divers washings, ordinances of flesh, imposed until the time of setting things right*.

The second object is the menorah, the Candlestick, *Exo 37:17 And he made the candlestick of pure gold; of beaten*

work he made the candlestick: its base, and its shaft, its cups, its knobs, and its flowers were of itself. Exo 37:18 And six branches went out of the sides thereof—three branches of the candlestick out of the one side thereof, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side thereof; Exo 37:19 there were three cups shaped like almonds in the one branch, a knob and a flower; and three cups shaped like almonds in the other branch, a knob and a flower: so in the six branches which went out of the candlestick.

The ancillary equipment that went with the Candlestick, the lamps, the tongs, the trays and even the oil to light the lamps is detailed. This light was placed in the tabernacle, which had three layers of covering over it, so it would have been black dark if they had not made this light, *Exo 27:20 And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee olive oil, pure, beaten, for the light, to light the lamp continually. Exo 27:21 7 In the tent of meeting outside the veil, which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall dress them* ***from evening to morning (***מערב עד־בקר***)*** *before Jehovah: it is an everlasting statute, for their generations, on the part of the children of Israel*.

The phrase “from evening to morning” does not mean overnight. The phrase is used in the creation to describe the “day” of 24 hours, *Gen 1:5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the* ***evening and the morning*** *(*ויהי־ערב ויהי־בקר*) were the first day.* It is senseless to call it a creation “day” if it started at evening and ended at dawn, because that would not be a day, but half a day. The light is called day and the dark is called night and they make up one day, so “evening and morning” are by this “night and day”. Therefore the lamps burned continually.

This item in the Tabernacle is also a type of Christ, *Joh 1:5 And the light appears in darkness, and the darkness apprehended it not.* I like this translation, *Joh 1:5 The light keeps shining in the dark, and darkness has never put it out.* CEV. Jesus is always showing Himself as the light, in a dark world, and He gives light to His people, *1Pe 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*:

He is the “Light of the World”, *Joh 8:12 Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, I am the light of the world; he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.....Joh 9:4 I must work the works of him that has sent me while it is day. The night is coming, when no one can work. Joh 9:5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.* When Jesus was crucified, the light went out, literally, *Luk 23:44 And it was about the sixth hour, and there came darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. Luk 23:45 And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple rent in the midst. Luk 23:46 And Jesus, having cried with a loud voice, said, Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.*

And having said this, he expired. The sun took its cue from Jesus and stopped shining.

The book of Revelation shows that Jesus is the Menorah, the lampstand upon which burn the lamps of the churches. The KJV translation of the “lamps” as “candlesticks” is wrong or archaic. Jesus walks amongst the lamps, *Rev 1:17 And when I saw him I fell at his feet as dead; and he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; *I* am the first and the last, Rev 1:18 and the living one: and I became dead, and behold, I am living to the ages of ages, and have the keys of death and of hades. Rev 1:19 Write therefore what thou hast seen, and the things that are, and the things that are about to be after these. Rev 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou hast seen on my right hand, and the seven golden lamps. —**The seven stars are angels of the seven assemblies; and the seven lamps are seven assemblies***. Darby.

83. How Did They Worship?

Preparatory reading: Exodus Chapter 25

I think that people accept what is served up as religion because they trust the people doling it out to them to be honest people. Take the form of the Buildings that are used for worship. They have a place for preaching, a place for the people attending usually in “flight mode”, facing in the same direction towards the pilot, the minister, a table or altar at one end of the building, and some forms of embellishment, from flowers to candles, from stained glass windows to crucifixes.

I cannot believe that my fellow passengers in life will swallow the religious junk food that is served to them in the religious pop up cafes without having the mind to search out where it came from.

Some of today’s religious liars have the nerve to call these buildings “the House of God”. I challenge them to show me that God actually resides there or indeed has anything to do with those places when Scripture emphatically says, *Act 7:48* ***But the Most High does not live in buildings built by human hands***. *As the prophet says: Act 7:49 '"Heaven is my throne, and earth a footstool for my feet. What house can you build for me?" says the Lord; "Or what place is there in which I can rest? Act 7:50 Was it not my hand that made them all?"'* In their little fantasy world, a man made religious fantasy world, these leaders think that they can manipulate and control “god”, they tell lots of lies about Him to deceive people, and they create an imaginary dwelling for God, a box to keep Him in, a house for Him, to keep Him separate from your house where you live.

These buildings have some air about them which reminds me of the Tabernacle or Temple of the Old Testament. As the years have passed, some of the buildings

have grown to resemble the majesty of those ancient Jewish buildings, Cathedrals, even trying to surpass them in splendour. The layout and the objects found in the great architecture of some of the finest buildings is remarkably like the things of old. We seem to hanker after the past and in recreating it, we find some comfort in the continuity of our religion.

All of these objects and buildings are of absolutely no use whatsoever without the people who attend them, and we forget one important fact that the church is composed of people, and the church met in a house = οικος = oikos. The building where the church met was your house, *Rom 16:5* ***Likewise greet the church that is in their house****. Salute my wellbeloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ*.

The concept today is that the church is the building and the people who gather at the building called the church, are the church. This would be as daft as calling the people who gathered at the Tabernacle (a building) “the tabernacle”, or the people who gathered at the Temple, another building, the temple or templars. People who go to a Cathedral would by this usage be called “cathedralers”, and those going to a Minster, would be called “minsters”. So we have by this use of language, turned the people who were a church into a building called the church. We are confused to say the least.

Those among us who cannot see why God built a Tabernacle and then upgraded it to a Temple, and then in the New Testament saw the Temple vanish and nothing replace it, must also wonder what sort of worship the people gave to the Lord. When the Tabernacle was built, what was its purpose? It was a portable meeting place, *Exo 29:43 I will meet with the Israelites at that place, and my Glory will make that place holy.* ERV.....*Exo 25:8 And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. Exo 25:9 According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.*

As we know, God has no earthly house to live in made by man, so this was symbolic of God’s presence among His people. In order to live with sinful man, there had to be a symbolic sacrifice for sin continually, *Exo 29:42 This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee. Exo 29:43 And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and* ***the tabernacle*** *shall be sanctified by my glory. Exo 29:44 And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office. Exo 29:45 And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God.*

To say the Tabernacle was a place of worship, it is necessary to define worship. Jesus definition is by far the best, given under the Old Testament, you will note, to the Samaritan woman, *Joh 4:23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when* ***the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth****: for the*

Father seeketh such to worship him. Joh 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. Worship is coming before Him and doing all the things that He wants, in truth. In other words, the moment that we fail to honour God by going against His word, we cease to worship Him.

For example, *Mat 5:23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Mat 5:24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift*. It is a pointless exercise and certainly not worship, to have anything against your brother whilst pretending to make an offering. If people came to the Tabernacle to worship, by making an offering for sin, as was required by the Lord, it had no value as worship while other matters were outstanding.

Worship at the Tabernacle consisted of the priestly service to God, and this was not everybody's duty, only those of the Tribe of Levi called priests. The remaining tribes were kept out of the Tabernacle proper, and a buffer zone around the Tent of the Tabernacle was made, where the Israelite could make an offering for their sin. They could only enter the Tabernacle by proxy, that is by the service of a priest, *Lev 1:1 And the LORD called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying, Lev 1:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man of you bring an offering unto the LORD, ye shall bring your offering of the cattle, even of the herd, and of the flock. Lev 1:3 If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish:* ***he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD****. Lev 1:4 And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him*.

Let's be clear on this, the Tabernacle was the tent, and it was situated in a "courtyard", *Exo 27:9 Surround the sacred tent with a courtyard one hundred fifty feet long on the south and north and seventy-five feet wide on the east and west. Use twenty bronze posts on bronze stands for the south and north and ten for the west. Then hang a curtain of fine linen on the posts along each of these three sides by using silver hooks and rods. Place three bronze posts on each side of the entrance at the east and hang a curtain seven and a half yards wide on each set of posts*. CEV. The ordinary Israelites were forbidden to go into the Tabernacle, this was the priest's territory. The courtyard was the place containing the altar and other items used in sacrifices for sin. The Israelite offering a sacrifice came to the "door" of the courtyard to make his offering.

The priests and particularly the High Priest, were the ones who conducted the proxy worship on behalf of the people. The people went in to the Tabernacle by proxy, carried on the breast of the High Priest **by symbols on a breast plate**, which displayed them to the Lord,*Exo 28:26 Attach two other gold rings to the lower inside corners next to the vest Exo 28:27 and two more near the bottom of the shoulder straps right above the sash. Exo 28:28 Then take a blue cord and*

tie the two lower rings on the breastpiece to those on the vest. This will keep the breastpiece in place. Exo 28:29 ***In this way Aaron will have the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written on his heart each time he enters the holy place, and I will never forget my people****. Exo 28:30 He must also wear on his breastpiece the two small objects that he uses to receive answers from me*. CEV.

This is "worship", but it is doing what the Israelite was commanded to do, for example, offer a sacrifice if he had sinned. The priests generally undertook the worship or service of God at the Tabernacle. Not quite the worship which we might have expected.

How many times a year were the Israelites to go to worship at the Tabernacle? It was only 3 times, *Deu 16:13 After you have gathered the grain from your threshing floor and made your wine, celebrate the Festival of Booths for seven days. Deu 16:14 Enjoy yourselves at the festival along with your sons, daughters, male and female slaves, the Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows who live in your cities. Deu 16:15 For seven days you will celebrate this festival dedicated to the LORD your God in the place he will choose. You will enjoy yourselves, because the LORD your God will bless all your harvest and all your work. Deu 16:16* ***Three times a year all your men must come into the presence of the LORD your God at the place he will choose: at the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Weeks, and the Festival of Booths.*** *But no one may come into the presence of the LORD without an offering. Deu 16:17 Each man must bring a gift in proportion to the blessings the LORD your God has given him.* GW.

It was going to be a logistical nightmare to come to the Tabernacle every week. Travel times were quite long, for example, Galilee in the north of Israel, to Jerusalem in mid-Israel would take at least 30 hours to travel the 91 miles, that is a 3 day journey on foot, 30 miles a day. So the Jews would make 3 trips per year, to the place where God put his Name.

What about the Sabbath, was that a worship day? *Exo 31:13 Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you. Exo 31:14 Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Exo 31:15 Six days may work be done;* ***but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest****, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death*.

The Sabbath was a day of rest, not the day of service where the person went to meetings to worship. It was not a day when he held a solemn assembly and had so many religious things to do that he forgot God, and was so busy that he was glad to get back to work the next day. It was a day of rest, *Isa 58:13 The LORD*

says, "If you treat the Sabbath as sacred and do not pursue your own interests on that day; if you value my holy day and honor it by not traveling, working, or talking idly on that day, Isa 58:14 then you will find the joy that comes from serving me. I will make you honored all over the world, and you will enjoy the land I gave to your ancestor, Jacob. I, the LORD, have spoken." GNB. You regarded the Lord, you set the day apart to rejoice in the Lord, and that didn't take anyone other than you to do it.

The Sabbath had regard to Sabbaths other than weekly Sabbaths. God says, *Lev 25:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the LORD. Lev 25:3 Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard*..... *Exo 23:10 And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: Exo 23:11 But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard*.

Did they worship God by obeying this land Sabbath? No they did not, and for this reason they were taken into Babylonian captivity, *2Ch 36:21 To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years*. That is, 70 x 7 years of land Sabbaths, or for 490 years, that the people of the Lord did not observe this command and did not worship. Sabbatarian's who are selective about what Sabbath they keep are hypocrites.

After seven cycles of sabbatical years, a total of 49 years, the fiftieth year was proclaimed a jubilee L*ev 25:8 And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years. Lev 25:9 Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. Lev 25:10 And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family. Lev 25:11 A jubile shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed*. Again, the land was to rest from cultivation (verse 11), and all families that had become poor and had mortgaged their land could return to their possession. This is an equally important Sabbath.

Worship involved keeping the commands of God, and this is done in the real world, outside of the assembly. It is seen in our interactions with men, not in how well you can sing hymns, how well you dress when you go to meetings, how much knowledge you have, how you behave in that narrow window of meetings.

Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees, *Mat 15:7 Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, Mat 15:8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. Mat 15:9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*.

You can honour God with your mouth, you can say the right things, but you know when your heart is lying, when it only says the right things because men are present and you make the right noises to satisfy them. You know what the Lord wants you to do, but you don't do it, because the things of this world have become important, more important than the things God laid down, and His teachings are not as important as the things which men teach. If that is the case, you are worshipping God in vain. If you don't keep any of Jesus commands, you are worshipping in vain, and that is why so much that man does is just empty worship.

When the Israelites had settled down in the land under their king David, he wanted to build a permanent house for God. The Tent, the Tabernacle had served its purpose, but because he had been involved in so much killing, Davi was forbidden, but his son Solomon was given the go ahead, *1Ch 22:6 Then he called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build an house for the LORD God of Israel. 1Ch 22:7 And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God: 1Ch 22:8 But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight. 1Ch 22:9 Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. 1Ch 22:10 He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever*.

84. The Tabernacle and Jesus

Preparatory reading: Exodus Chapter 23

We saw the worship was service to God and that man was involved in that expression of service as more of a passenger in the Old Testament ritual, than the principle party driving it. He took the sacrifice to the door (curtain) of the Tabernacle and the priest undertook the service from then on. The three compulsory feasts of Israel were more of a celebration, a harvest festival than sombre worship, *Exo 23:17Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord GOD. Exo 23:18 Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of my sacrifice remain until the*

morning. Exo 23:19 The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.

The Sabbath was a day of rest, and worship was just being at home alone with no work. Worship was in the main, the obedience to the faith, everyday service to God, and that worship to God was by submission to the Law and it was conducted outside of the general service of the Tabernacle. Thus worship for the ordinary Israelite was doing the Law and he was not generally involved in the worship in the Tabernacle. There was no regular service of worship, or going to "church", and synagogues never existed before Israel went into the Babylonian captivity. We might rightly ask what then was the purpose of the Tabernacle?

We see that the Tabernacle was the "dwelling place of God", a concession to Israel as long as the people obeyed Him. The Tabernacle was situated in a curtained courtyard where the people of Israel offered sacrifices for their sin, but only the priests could enter the Tabernacle, or Tent of the meeting, which meant the "place of the meeting with God". The inner sanctum of the Tabernacle, called the Holy of Holies was entered once a year, *Lev 16:32 The high priest must offer the sacrifices for cleansing from sin, while wearing the sacred linen clothes. Lev 16:33 He will offer these sacrifices for the most holy place, the sacred tent, the bronze altar, all the priests, and for the whole community. Lev 16:34 You must celebrate this day each year—it is the Great Day of Forgiveness for all the sins of the people of Israel. Moses did exactly as the LORD had commanded.* CEV……*Heb 9:7 However, only the high priest could go into the second part of the tent, and he went in only once a year. Each time he carried blood to offer for his sins and for any sins that the people had committed without meaning to. Heb 9:8 All of this is the Holy Spirit's way of saying that no one could enter the most holy place while the tent was still the place of worship*. CEV.

The entry into the Holy of Holies, once a year on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, was to sprinkle blood on the Mercy seat, for the High Priest's sins, and the people's sins, *Lev 16:15 Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: Lev 16:16 And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness*. This was like a spring clean of all the sins of the people, and getting them clean so that they could have the pleasure of the Lord staying another year with a sinful people. All of the sin was swept away on this day, and there were no offences set to their account, the counter was reset, set back to show zero sins. It was a time for afflicting the soul.

A lot of the service of the Tabernacle, the offering of incense, the lighting of the lamps, the putting bread on the table, the rituals required by God, was conducted away from the eyes of the people and they never saw anything

whatsoever that happened in the Tabernacle. How did they know about it? From what Moses told them and in his writings and that was about all. Did they ever see the seven branched “candlestick”, for example? No, they did not, because when the Tabernacle was moved, everything was covered, *Num 4:9 With another blue cloth they will cover the lampstand, along with the lamps, the lamp snuffers, the fire pans, and the jars of oil for the lamps. Num 4:10 All of this will then be covered with a piece of fine leather and placed on a carrying frame.* CEV.

All of the instruments of the Tabernacle, all of the different items were covered, *Num 4:4 This shall be the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation, about the most holy things: Num 4:5 And when the camp setteth forward, Aaron shall come, and his sons, and they shall take down the covering vail, and cover the ark of testimony with it: Num 4:6 And shall put thereon the covering of badgers' skins, and shall spread over it a cloth wholly of blue, and shall put in the staves thereof. Num 4:7 And upon the table of shewbread they shall spread a cloth of blue, and put thereon the dishes, and the spoons, and the bowls, and covers to cover withal: and the continual bread shall be thereon: Num 4:8 And they shall spread upon them a cloth of scarlet, and cover the same with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put in the staves thereof. Num 4:9 And they shall take a cloth of blue, and cover the candlestick of the light, and his lamps, and his tongs, and his snuffdishes, and all the oil vessels thereof, wherewith they minister unto it: Num 4:10 And they shall put it and all the vessels thereof within a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put it upon a bar. Num 4:11 And upon the golden altar they shall spread a cloth of blue, and cover it with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put to the staves thereof: Num 4:12 And they shall take all the instruments of ministry, wherewith they minister in the sanctuary, and put them in a cloth of blue, and cover them with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put them on a bar:*

The ordinary Israelite never saw these items at all. He could visualize them, see them as it were, by faith, but not as they actually existed because they were covered, and the descriptions of them, by Moses, gave each man some room for seeing some differences in their appearance, depending on their imagination. When it was carried away, it could have looked like a duck under a blanket for all they knew, a shadow of the thing that it intended to portray. So why have all the coverings over it?

These were God’s private things, in His House, God’s dwelling, not man’s things in man’s house. They were God’s favourite things, objects of special meaning to Him, a bit like us in a way, who have the objects that give us pleasure, a photograph which causes us to remember a loved one. Take one such object, the Mercy seat, *Rom 3:24 being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; Rom 3:25 whom God has set forth* ***a mercy-seat****, through faith in his blood, for the shewing forth of his righteousness, in respect of the passing by the sins that had taken place before, through the forbearance of God; Rom 3:26 for the shewing forth of his righteousness in the present time, so that he should be just, and justify him that is of the faith of Jesus.* Darby.

There it is, in God’s house, the Mercy-seat, a representation of Christ, an earthly image of the Redeemer, the Only begotten Son. It was not for man to see but for God only at this time and He kept it under wraps, as we might say. All of the objects in His house, I would say, are things which remind Him of Jesus, the golden Lampstand which is the light of the world, the golden Table containing bread which is the Bread of life, the Golden altar of incense which is Jesus the Mediator praying for us, etc,. Equally precious are the objects placed outside of the Tabernacle, in the courtyard, and they too remind us of Jesus earthly ministry, but because of man, they are tarnished and made of copper.

The whole of the set up of the tabernacle and courtyard, was a copy of God’s real Palace in the heavenlies, *Heb 8:5 But **the tent where they serve is just a copy and a shadow** of the real one in heaven. Before Moses made the tent, he was told, "Be sure to make it exactly like the pattern you were shown on the mountain!"* CEV. It was the Father’s house, *Joh 14:2 In **my Father's house** there are many abodes; were it not so, I had told you: for I go to prepare you a place; Joh 14:3 and if I go and shall prepare you a place, I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am ye also may be*. Darby. It is interesting that the word “father” is used 130 times in John’s Gospel, mostly of our relationship to God. Why is it then that so many Christians do not refer to Him as their Father, perhaps because they do not know Him?

God’s house, the Father’s house, was built from the spoil of Egypt, which they gave to the Israelites voluntarily, *Exo 12:35 The Israelites had already done what Moses had told them to do. They had gone to their Egyptian neighbors and asked for gold and silver and for clothes. Exo 12:36 The LORD had made the Egyptians friendly toward the people of Israel, and they gave them whatever they asked for. In this way they carried away the wealth of the Egyptians when they left Egypt.* CEV. This was the substance for a voluntary offering from which the people made the Tabernacle, *Exo 25:1 And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, Exo 25:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me a heave-offering: of every one whose heart prompteth him, ye shall take my heave-offering. Exo 25:3 And this is the heave-offering that ye shall take of them: gold, and silver, and copper, Exo 25:4 and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and byssus, and goats' hair , Exo 25:5 and rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins; and acacia-wood; Exo 25:6 oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil, and for the incense of fragrant drugs*; *Exo 25:7 onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate. Exo 25:8 And they shall make me **a sanctuary**, that I may dwell among them. Exo 25:9 According to all that I shall shew thee, the pattern of **the tabernacle**, and the pattern of all the utensils thereof, even so shall ye make it* . Darby.

They did not have to give, and no doubt some did not give of their wealth, but others did, not knowing how it would be used. In that secret world of the tabernacle, their treasure was worked into the miracle that became God’s house, the Father’s house, *1Pe 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual*

house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. This should remind us of the Scriptures which say, *1Co 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 1Co 3:12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 1Co 3:13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 1Co 3:14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward*.

What are we building and where will it lead? The Israelites used their earthly wealth to build God's earthly house. The Christian uses his spiritual wealth to build Christ's house, *1Co 3:13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fireshall try every man's work of what sort it is. 1Co 3:14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 1Co 3:15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. 1Co 3:16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? 1Co 3:17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are*.

The earthly dwelling place of the Father had so much symbolism, but whether the Israelites understood it or not, is unknown, though some saw Jesus in the distant mists. Due to their constant disobedience, God removed the item so necessary, the focal point of the Father's dwelling, the place where God communicated with man through Moses, the Mercy-seat, *Num 7:89 And when Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with him, then* ***he heard the voice of one speaking unto him from off the mercy seat that was upon the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubims: and he spake unto him***.

The Mercy-seat and the golden chest, the Ark, on which it sat were taken in the time of Eli the priest/judge. The people were called to do battle with the Philistines, and the thought that by taking the Ark out with them that they would gain a favourable decision because God was with them. Well He wasn't and the resulting battle let to the capture of the Ark, and moreover Eli was so shocked the he fell of his seat and broke his neck, because Israel's glory had departed, *1Sa 4:18 And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years. 1Sa 4:19 And his daughter in law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, near to be delivered: and when she heard the tidings that the ark of God was taken, and that her father in law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and travailed; for her pains came upon her. 1Sa 4:20 And about the time of her death the women that stood by her said unto her, Fear not; for thou hast born a son. But she answered not, neither did she regard it. 1Sa 4:21 And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God*

was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband. 1Sa 4:22 And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken.

With the Mercy-seat gone religion was just an empty ritual. There was nowhere to do the Day of Atonement, nowhere to speak with God. It was like God had suddenly left with His treasured possession and left the tent of the meeting. After many journeys the Ark was again reunited with Israel under king David and brought to the Tabernacle of David in Jerusalem, while the old Tabernacle was at Gibeon. This spelt the end of the Tabernacle because a permanent Temple at Jerusalem would take over its function, *1Ch 23:25 David said: The LORD God of Israel has given his people peace, and he will live in Jerusalem forever. 1Ch 23:26 And so, the Levites won't need* ***to move the sacred tent*** *and the things used for worship from place to place. 1Ch 23:27 From now on, all Levites at least twenty years old 1Ch 23:28 will serve the LORD by helping Aaron's descendants* ***do their work at the temple****, by keeping the courtyards and rooms of the temple clean, and by making sure that everything used in worship stays pure. 1Ch 23:29 They will also be in charge of the sacred loaves of bread, the flour for the grain sacrifices, the thin wafers, any offerings to be baked, and the flour mixed with olive oil. These Levites will weigh and measure these offerings. 1Ch 23:30 Every morning and evening, the Levites are to give thanks to the LORD and sing praises to him. 1Ch 23:31 They must also give thanks and sing praises when sacrifices are offered on each Sabbath, as well as during New Moon Festivals and other religious feasts.* ***There must always be enough Levites on duty at the temple*** *to do everything that needs to be done. 1Ch 23:32* ***They were once in charge of taking care of the sacred tent; now they are responsible for the temple and for helping Aaron's descendants****.* CEV.

The Tabernacle had served its purpose and was subsumed by the Temple, which in turn would cease to be a place of earthly worship.

There is one more thing which is devotional more than doctrinal. Jesus tabernacled with us, *Joh 1:14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us. And we beheld His glory, glory as of an only begotten from the Father, full of grace and of truth.* LITV. Like the Old Testament Tabernacle, Jesus came from heaven to dwell among us, and if you looked carefully, with spiritual eyes, you could see all the earthly emblems of Jesus in the Tabernacle of Moses.

Like the earthly Tabernacle, Jesus was betrayed by sinful men, and left Israel to take up residence in Glory, in the “Temple” in heaven which is described as The Father and Jesus, God Almighty and the Lamb, *Rev 21:22 And I saw no temple therein:* ***for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.*** *Rev 21:23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. Rev 21:24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. Rev 21:25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there*.

We shall look more into the history of the Tabernacle later DV.

85. Conformity and Non-conformity. Part 1

Preparatory reading: Ephesians Chapter 5

I want to briefly look at the pressure, group pressure, tradition, customs, society and ethnicity that play a part in creating the forms of Christianity that we have. There is in the many forms of Christianity, a desire to get a person to conform to the norms of the group, or denomination or sect. A convert is a blank canvass, an unformed block, a plain sheet of metal which is ready to be shaped. What shape will it be formed into, will it be the shape of those around them in a particular assembly? By the pressures put upon them as they are forged and moulded into a shape which will mark them, possibly for life, as an adherent of a particular denomination or sect.

Children are particularly susceptible to this moulding for a good reason. 'Give me a child till he is seven years old,' said St Ignatius Loyola, 'and I will show you the man.' "The founder of the Jesuit Brotherhood was way ahead of his time. For most of human history, serious-minded adults paid scant attention to the under-sevens. After all, small children have no obvious economic worth. They're also difficult to control and apparently impervious to reason…but neuroscience has proved Loyola right. Children's experiences in those first seven years, when the formation of the neural networks is governed largely by emotion, will affect their behaviour throughout life. As an international organisation determined to mould human souls for its own purposes, the Jesuit Brotherhood was spot on in targeting the very young".

When we speak of non-conformism, we generally mean Protestant Christians who did not "conform" to the governance and usages of the state church in England. Use of the term Nonconformist in England and Wales came into use after the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660, when the Act of Uniformity, in 1662 renewed opposition to reforms within the established church. By the late 19th century the term specifically included other Reformed Christians (Presbyterians and Congregationalists), plus the Baptists, Brethren, Methodists, and Quakers. In Ireland, the comparable term, until the Church of Ireland's disestablishment in 1869, was "Dissenter" (the term earlier used in England), commonly referring to Irish Presbyterians who dissented from the approved Anglican communion. English Dissenters such as the Puritans, who violated the Act of Uniformity 1558, typically by practising radical, sometimes separatist dissent, were retrospectively labelled as Nonconformists.

By law and social custom, Nonconformists were restricted from many spheres of public life, not least, from access to public office, civil service careers, or degrees

at University and were referred to as suffering from civil disabilities. In England and Wales in the late 19th century the new terms "free church" and "Free churchman" (or "Free church person") started to replace "Nonconformist" or "Dissenter". One influential Nonconformist minister was Matthew Henry, who beginning in 1710 published his multi-volume commentary that is still used and available in the 21st century. Isaac Watts is an equally recognised Nonconformist minister whose hymns are still sung by Christians worldwide. The term Nonconformist is used in a broader sense to refer to Christians who are not communicants of a majority national church, such as the Lutheran Church of Sweden.

Is non-conformity just not going along with the church of England, because my definition extends far past that heretical organisation? It extends to any organisation which attempts to conform individuals to an image of Christ **which does not exist** and **which teaches us to observe teachings which do not come from the God of the Bible who is Jesus Christ**. Such differences start out, seemingly innocuously, but soon harden into blatant disobedience to Christ.

I was reading an article in “The Bible League Quarterly” entitled “A new Hymn book”. It said,

> Following the publishing of New Christian Hymns, which many reformed congregations found disappointing, particularly on account of the inclusion of many charismatic songs and choruses and the modernising of the language in many of the hymns, some two dozen ministers met in Dudley in March 2005 to discuss the possibility of producing a new hymnbook to fill the gap which would be left by the eventual demise of the original Christian Hymns. The press release following that meeting indicated that a new hymnbook, to be called Christian Worship, was planned with the intention of offering a traditional alternative to contemporary books such as Praise! and New Christian Hymns.
>
> The new hymnbook is the work of a small editorial committee chaired by Neil Pfeiffer and including Vernon Higham, author of contemporary classics such as “Great is the gospel of our glorious God” and “I saw a new vision of Jesus.”
>
> The editors say that Christian Worship is seeking to take traditional evangelical worship, as represented by twentieth century hymnbooks such as Christian Hymns, Gospel Hymns and Grace Hymns, forward into the twenty first century and they believe that it will make a unique contribution to traditional evangelical worship in the coming years. While many will criticize the book as nothing more than a collection of largely 18th & 19th Century hymns, this reviewer believes that the editors have succeeded admirably in their endeavour and that there

are a number of commendable improvements in Christian Worship in comparison with other modern hymnbooks.

Well excuse me for asking, but who gives a body of two dozen ministers, the right to pontificate over a new hymn book, shouldn't they have more serious things to do, like examining their own foundations? Besides, I do not read that hymnbooks and psalmistry's are books which we should contend for. Music is something we do naturally, spontaneously, without interference of other people trying to mould us, *Eph 5:18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Eph 5:19 Speaking to* ***yourselves*** *in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and* ***making melody in your heart to the Lord****; Eph 5:20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

It was reading this article that caused me to consider the junk that we just swallow and conform to, unthinkingly and without questioning as we go on in the faith. We have been conditioned to accept like fools, anything that is presented to us by the group that we associate with, as being true. We have by this thoughtless action given over the right of Christ to govern our lives, to a church that is made by men, and although they may be well meaning men, sincere men but some are sincerely misled. We have sold our birthright for a pot of stew, and the worse thing about it is, we are quite happy with that deal.

We deserve the "churches" we have because we sustain them without thinking about their origins. They cannot exist without us paying for them and they milk us week by week, and we are the ignorant fools who keep them going.

It's the same way that we take on the norms of our culture, the traditions and prejudices, with scarce a thought as to why we do them. Why we follow men without even knowing where they came from and trusting them with our welfare as if they were God. It might add some stability to our lives but the world view that we were born with is not the same as the one we see in Christ, because it is flawed by sin that we were born in. In this great universe, we are dust in the balances and we invent things to give us stability but why do we adopt the things that we do? Christ is the only way, but then I take Him by faith and not everybody has faith.

The Scripture says, *1Th 5:21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good*. In matters of religion, doctrine, we hold things that were passed to us, without examining them in the light of God's word. We adopt certain persuasions not because they are Biblical, but because we like them, we feel comfortable with them, and the people that we make friends with have the same ideas, usually the same social status as us, and it is not because Jesus has given to us that teaching. We have adopted the world's standards.

The men who sit in authority over us, the ministers, may think that they understand the great truths of Scripture, but do you as an ordinary person? You

accept what they believe without much question, after all, they have the time to go into these things and they wouldn't mislead you, would they? But they are suffering from their prejudices, and upbringing and the social/religious beliefs just as much as you and I, but they must apply the same criteria as you, *1Th 5:21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*

To be truly non-conformist, there must be something we conform to. The thing that I am turning away from, not conforming to, must have a counterpart, in the thing that I am turning towards, conforming to, as a reference point, a guide, a way mark. I do not conform to something because I believe that a teaching or teachings go contrary to my beliefs. If those teachings invariably conflict with the Biblical view of Christ's teachings, then I do not conform. Let me give an example, the belief that "Jesus is the Creator of all things", to which most Christians would agree. Being a bit more specific, we would point out that He created all things according as it says in Genesis, in 6 days. Some people would disagree and say that He created it over time, and say that we should accommodate the vast ages of the earth in the Genesis accounts although there is no evidence for it. Do we accept that view of Christ's teaching, or do we reject it and say Christ's word is an opinion? Is it something that we can accept in our belief structure, or do we reject it, and consequently find it a subject that divides us?

We have in this example, a scriptural problem that may be the cause of a division, "Did Jesus create the world in 6 literal days?" There may be some who reject the teaching and some who accept the teaching, but what position should we adopt? We could just ignore it, and say it was a difference in belief, a difference of opinions and look at the things we held in common, and go on in a sort of common disunity. We could say it was a matter waiting resolution, and we would just beg to differ at the present time. We could say that it was a matter which affected our vision of Christ, the truth of Scripture and that it must be an issue which causes division. What is it?

The apostle Paul says that we should avoid people who do not follow the "teaching we have learned", *Rom 16:17 But I beseech you, brethren, to consider those who create divisions and occasions of falling, contrary to the doctrine which *ye* have learnt, and turn away from them. Rom 16:18 For such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting*. Darby. But what is the "teaching we have learned"? Is it the modernist teaching of the churches today, or the teaching that was current in the days of the Apostles? And if it was the teaching in the days of the Apostles, what did it consist of?

If I take what the apostle is saying at face value, it means that I do not have anything to do with a person who does not hold my belief on Creation or any other matter, and I have become by that action, the arbiter of truth and I will go about ticking off of my list, those who disagree with me. Those who don't hold the doctrine of absolute Predestination, those who don't agree with baptism by

immersion, those who don't take wine but instead take non-alcoholic grape juice at the Lord's supper, those who do not follow the pattern of the New Testament church, those who worship in designer buildings called cathedrals, those who create mega-churches and hold to the prosperity gospel, those who dress up in frocks to minister to the congregation, those women who don't wear hair coverings, those who have women in charge of the church, etc. The list could go on until there is nobody left who agrees with me totally, and so I am left on my own, like "a lodge in a garden of cucumbers", but I am, so I think, correct, deluded or otherwise, doctrinally correct and arrogant. Is this really the position we should take?

Most people couldn't string a sentence together on those subjects and yet they conform to what the church believes, what they are taught. I knew a church that had a condition on membership of believing the teaching of the Post millennial second coming of Christ. You would have to know all the flavours of millennialism to help you make up your mind about Postmillennialism and I very much doubt that they did know what they had agreed to in membership, although it didn't stop people joining that church. I imagine that group pressure, personal weakness and ignorance made the people join.

The people who accept a limited number of things as necessary for membership, do not stop to consider whether it is right to submit to a set of rules that has been invented by man? Note, their membership rules do not make you a member of Christ's church and it was nothing that Christ required of you to submit to. It is typical of the way man grabs Christ's authority. This is an example of the process of "joining" a church.

1. Read the details of our Basis of Faith and the formal documents of the Church charity: If you have any questions about our Church or about membership, please contact us.
2. Contact us and we will send you a membership application form.
3. The Church will be told you are applying for membership and then you will be interviewed by two church members.
4. The Church Trustees will then consider your application, and if approved, will let you know and notify the other members with a brief summary of your Christian story.
5. New members are then welcomed into membership at a Church service.

You would think that you had gone to a Bank for a loan, with all the hoops you had to go through. Don't forget to take this worthless membership document with you when you die, to get it endorsed by Christ! This traps a person with little Biblical knowledge into an institution where they will be conformed to the teachings that already exist but will have no chance of changing.

I am certainly a non-conformist when it comes to church membership. Christians do not need a membership document to make them care for each other, *1Co 12:25 He did this to make all parts of the body work together smoothly, with*

each part caring about the others. *1Co 12:26 If one part of our body hurts, we hurt all over. If one part of our body is honoured, the whole body will be happy. 1Co 12:27 Together you are the body of Christ. Each one of you is part of his body*. CEV.

If the Corinthians had a handbook of faith, it was personal to them, but in addition it included the whole counsel of God, and the 15 things we have been dealing with, are only some of the things we should be doing,

1. The Problem of Divisions in the Church (1 Cor. 1:10-13)
2. The Problem of Worldly Wisdom (1 Cor. 1:17-2:16)
3. The Problem of Carnality (1 Cor. 3:1-4)
4. The Problem of Immorality in the Church (1 Cor. 5:1-13)
5. The Problem of Bringing a Fellow Believer to Court (1 Cor. 6:1-8)
6. The Problem of Fornication (1 Cor. 6:15-20)
7. The Problem of Marriage and Divorce (1 Cor. 7:1-40)
8. The Problem of Meats Offered to Idols (1 Cor. 8:1-13)
9. The Problem of the Role Men and Women Should Have in Christ's Church (1 Cor. 11:1-17)
10. The Problem of Abusing the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20-34)
11. The Problem of Spiritual Gifts (1 Cor. 12:1-31)
12. The Problem of a Lack of Love (1 Cor. 13:1-13)
13. The Problem of Speaking in Tongues (1 Cor. 14:1-40)
14. The Problem of Wrong Teaching About the Resurrection of the Dead (1 Cor. 15:1-58)
15. The Problem of Collecting for the Saints (1 Cor. 16:1-3)

But we seldom tackle these issues, and they are what divide the church. They are moral issues and a man or men who do not know you, cannot decide whether you or me are fit to join them.

86. Conformity and Non-conformity. Part 2

Preparatory reading: Romans Chapter 16

We introduced the subject of non-conformity in respect to certain aspects of Christianity and our attitudes to those people of different beliefs and practices to our own. Do we avoid everyone who does not conform to our view, and do we take it as a general rule to "turn away" from them? *Rom 16:17 But I beseech you, brethren, to consider those who create divisions and occasions of falling, contrary to the doctrine which *ye* have learnt, and turn away from them*. In exploring how a Christian should behave in a disagreement over teaching, we saw that there were a limited number of teachings put forward as agreed membership criteria, these being the **supposed** basic things for fellowship. Assent to them and you can join their club.

We suggested that it was a very incomplete list, and that there is much more required to get into the kingdom of heaven than those limited teachings. Drilling down, there are many other teachings that act like the “case laws” of the Old Testament that to some degree explain further, the principal teachings. Take this statement, one of the articles of membership of a church, which I found online, “**upholding Christian values**”, which I find no problem with as a statement, but what is not said is what are those “values” and are we agreed that they are “Christian” values, and do we believe in them enough to “uphold” them?

Here is a set of values,

- **Be respectful**: Say please and thank you, and show respect for others and school
- **Be kind**: Be kind to others and try your best
- **Be a good listener**: Listen while others are speaking and work quietly
- **Follow directions**: Follow directions and stay in your seat
- **Be clean and tidy**: Be clean and tidy, and share with others
- **Be ready to learn**: Be ready to learn and engage with others

That’s the rules of the Mickey Mouse club, seriously, and its not dissimilar from the “Christian” values which are equally vague!

This is where it gets “wishy washy”, like trying to get hold of a slippery fish which is struggling to get free. For most people it is just something they say and that’s it, a promise of “**upholding Christian values**” whatever that is. Then they are welcomed into the mansions of the faithful. But is this what Jesus intended? Look at the Corinthians, when Paul writes to them about 15 things which they aren’t doing, and Paul says they will void your profession of faith, *1Co 6:9 Don't you know that evil people won't have a share in the blessings of God's kingdom? Don't fool yourselves! No one who is immoral or worships idols or is unfaithful in marriage or is a pervert or behaves like a homosexual 1Co 6:10 will share in God's kingdom. Neither will any thief or greedy person or drunkard or anyone who curses and cheats others.* CEV. But Paul did not stop dealing with them because they had faults.

The churches seem to naively believe the profession of faith, “**upholding Christian values**”, as if the person upholding “them” is doing all of these things and is perfect, and 1 Corinthians Chapter 6 does not apply to them because they are perfect. Its absolute nonsense, because Paul shows these fledgling Christians are far from perfect, as you and I are far from perfect and we need to be reminded of our sins, *1Jn 1:8 If we say that we have not sinned, we are fooling ourselves, and the truth isn't in our hearts.* CEV

If it were true Christians were not sinning then why do we find so much fornication among them, as we have shown before,

- Approximately 20% of Christian men and 13% of Christian women admit to having had an extramarital affair.

• 55% of American Christian men and 44% of American Christian women have sought out pornography at least once a month.
• 35% of Protestant church leaders have counseled a couple where adultery was the issue.
• 60% of church-going Christian women say they have had an emotional affair at some point in their lives.
• Only 32% of pastors say they would resign if they had an affair.
• 45% of Christians say they have an immediate family member who has attempted suicide, had an extramarital affair, or used illegal drugs.
• 30-60% of clergy will report having had extramarital affairs while being in ministry.
• 64% of evangelicals say that sexual relationships between two people of the same sex are morally wrong.
• 45% of evangelical pastors have counseled women who have experienced a form of domestic violence.
• 62% of Christians believe that adultery is a sin.
• 32% of Christian men in the U.S. report watching porn at least monthly.
• The divorce rate in Christian marriages is estimated to be around 41%.
• Over 1 in 4 practicing Christians say they have felt addicted to porn at some point in their lives.
• 40% of evangelical Christians believe that living together before marriage is morally acceptable.
• 20% of churchgoers have experienced an unwanted romantic or sexual advance from a church leader.

That's just one of the many problems that Corinth is dealing with and there are 14 other issues, and most of the churches today don't tackle these issues as they go on in their "happy clappy" way. We know that this is happening in so many churches, but we immediately climb on the top step of our high horse and denounce them and separate from them because we are more righteous and because we have managed to conceal our back catalogue of sins. What would Jesus do? He took the woman caught in the act of having sex with some unknown man (I think they had witnesses to the act but the men let him go), and He says to her, *Joh 8:11 ..... Neither do I condemn thee: go, and* ***sin no more***. That is quite a different attitude shown to a sinner than most people would expect and certainly more than the self-righteous would show.

It does not excuse the sin, make light of the matter, and it warns against further transgression, but it does put things in perspective, *Psa 130:3* ***If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand****? Psa 130:4 But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared*. The Christian must teach against error and he must keep himself unspotted from the world but, *1Co 5:9 In my letter to you I told you not to associate with people who continue to commit sexual sins. 1Co 5:10 I didn't tell you that you could not have any contact with unbelievers who commit sexual sins, are greedy, are dishonest, or worship false gods. If that were the case, you would have to leave this world. 1Co 5:11 Now, what I meant was that you should not associate with people who call themselves*

brothers or sisters in the Christian faith but live in sexual sin, are greedy, worship false gods, use abusive language, get drunk, or are dishonest. Don't eat with such people. GW.

There is a difference between how we treat the world's people and how we treat the brethren. We are told not to have any association with the brethren who are sinning. I do not see this reaction to the brethren as being a sudden judgement but a considered judgement, after all things are taken into consideration. For example, if the person who committed the sin is repentant, then why should you have nothing to do with them, after all Christ forgave your sins, if you have repented? What if the person sinned in error, or did not know it was a sin, *Lev 4:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a soul shall sin through ignorance against any of the commandments of the LORD concerning things which ought not to be done, and shall do against any of them.....Lev 4:27 And if any one of the common people sin through ignorance, while he doeth somewhat against any of the commandments of the LORD concerning things which ought not to be done, and be guilty; Lev 4:28 Or if his sin, which he hath sinned, come to his knowledge*: The Lord was willing to forgive the person and so must you.

You can bear with the sinner as long as the sinner is repentant, but if they refuse you must sanction them, but ever be prepared to forgive them, "70 times 7". Now in today's "churches", we do not have the closeness with each other or know each other well enough to exercise this sort of ministry. We go to a church **without** asking, "Does it exercise a ministry that is concerned to bring me into the kingdom?" But are we really concerned for our brethren in the assembly, and what if things do not suit us, someone in the church annoys us, we are off to find a new church without attempting to find a resolution to our dispute. We suit ourselves about worship, and we deliberately avoid personal rebukes or issues which cause us discomfort. This is not worship, this is not caring, this is not forgiving, this is not Christianity.

Getting away from the "big church" model, the church that is located miles away from where you live, far enough away that you don't really know anyone as you sit sideways to them in pew, we start to rethink the church as it was founded by Jesus. In fact it is a good exercise to draw up the pattern of meeting from Scripture alone, and you will find little that resembles the assembly today. The people in those days met together because they were Christians, **in the place where they live**. This is more personal than the church building or steeple house, it is our home, or your home, *Act 2:46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Act 2:47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved*. No one place is more important than another, it's just where you meet.

In that community of believers, of the house church or church in your house, you cannot escape scrutiny. Its not like the formal church that doesn't know anyone in any depth, and you can avoid people without causing offence. You are going to

be polished in the house church and have the edges knocked off of you. You may not like it but there is nowhere to run if you do not, and going to another church is not an option, because if they are truly brethren, they will send you back to reconcile matters. The only way out of the local church is for you to be put out because of sin that is not repented of, or you move home, or you die. You certainly do not just up sticks and go because you do not like something. A church who accepts the church hoppers without resolving the issues of separation is a disgrace to Christ.

Always, the Christian should be reconciled with a brother or sister. Harbouring malice against them is not only un-christian but will get you punished by God, *Eph 4:25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. Eph 4:26 Be ye angry, and sin not:* ***let not the sun go down upon your wrath****: Eph 4:27 Neither give place to the devil*. We are not perfect, and one of the things we have to accept is that from time to time we will get rebuked for something we did wrong. Accept this with good grace and continue on.

If the people who had become non-conformist, had for a moment considered Christ's plan of the church, they would not have had to adopt "non-conformist" attitudes. But because they had adopted an association which for years was deviating more and more from the truth, and because their organisations were unrecognisable as Christian bodies, they felt the need to dissent, to try and get back to true worship. I believe that nearly all church organisations have deviated from the Biblical pattern of the church, worship and service to Christ. They invent something from their own imagination, because Christ does not meet their needs, and the farther away Christ is from them, the more they invent because they cannot see Him. Perhaps that is why you get the statues, crucifixes and all the religious trappings of the high churches which are just like sepulchres to religion, the symbols of a dead religion. The Old Testaments was full of symbols of Christ but that disappeared when the reality, Jesus had come.

We need to get back to the simplicity, the single mindedness which is in Christ, *2Co 11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from* ***the simplicity that is in Christ***. Our goal is to serve Him, obey Him and eventually come home to Him, as The Westminster Shorter Catechism says, Q. 1. What is the chief end of man? A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.

That applies to the leaders as well as the people. There is a general impression that the church leaders have got it all right and the people have not. The idea that church leaders are above reproach and do not have anything to do. Well that is plain wrong. They are as sinful as the rest, and they must stop hiding behind the mask of hypocrisy, *1Co 10:11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. 1Co 10:12* ***Wherefore let him that thinketh he***

standeth take heed lest he fall. That is why an open dialogue among **ALL** believers is necessary.

What teachings are necessary for Salvation? Why, All of them, *Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:Eph 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God,* ***unto a perfect man****, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: Eph 4:14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; Eph 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: Eph 4:16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love*. It is striving to achieve Christ, with the pattern of Christ being the motivation, held firmly before us, our goal.

It is like the law, you can't pick and choose what you will do, *Jas 2:10* ***If you obey every law except one, you are still guilty of breaking them all****. Jas 2:11 The same God who told us to be faithful in marriage also told us not to murder. So even if you are faithful in marriage, but murder someone, you still have broken God's Law*. CEV. The churches that invent membership also invent a minimum standard for entry that will lull you into thinking that because they have accepted you on their terms, Christ will do the same. No, He will not, because salvation requires that we do everything that He says we should.

It's not so much about being non-conformist to a man made set of rules, a man made earthly church, the traditions or men and worldly worship, and conforming to another set of manmade rules, another man made church, different traditions and another form of worldly worship, it is none of those things, **it is about conforming to Christ**, *Rom 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate* ***to be conformed (συμμορφός) to the image of his Son****, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Rom 8:30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

I have heard and been involved in many discussions about predestination over the years, but I have never heard the principal thought brought out, that of predestinating so that we should become as Christ, "*he also did predestinate* ***to be conformed (συμμορφός) to the image of his Son***". To "morph" us together, to mould us into the image of Christ. That doesn't require a few changes, that is a complete makeover, and we should be very concerned that it is taking place, and if it is not, we are not predestined.

We conform to Jesus, but we are told not to conform to the world, *Rom 12:2* ***And be not conformed (συσχηματίζω) to this world****: but be ye transformed by*

the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. We are told not to be made in the image of man, according to the schematics of the world, the plans of the world.

There then we have summed up conformity and non-conformity. Conformity to Christ alone and non-conformity to this world, and all else is worthless, all else is like looking for ”wind in a field”.

87. A Word to Ministers

Preparatory reading: Titus Chapter 1 and 1 Timothy Chapter 3

I want to insert a few words about Ministers and their conduct, church ministers. It will probably help to define “ministers” before I launch into the subject. The term "minister" comes from the Latin word minister, which means "servant" or "attendant". The Greek word is deacon, *Mat 20:26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister (διάκονος); Mat 20:27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant (δοῦλος): Mat 20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered (διάκονος) unto, but to minister (διάκονος) , and to give his life a ransom for many*.

It is, by my definition, everyone who would attend upon others in an assembly. This would include sisters, brothers, apostles and by this illustration, prophets, teachers, pastors, evangelists, miracle workers, healers, etc, all are servants, ministers to the body of Christ, *Mar 9:35 And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant (διάκονος) of all..... Mar 9:35 And sitting down he called the twelve; and he says to them, If any one would be first, he shall be last of all, and* ***minister*** *of all*. Darby. It comprises all who are called Christian and serve Christians.

The ministry embraces all of God’s children who will serve other Christians, *Rom 16:1 But I commend to you Phoebe, our sister, who is* ***minister (διάκονος)*** *of the assembly which is in Cenchrea; Darby.....1Co 3:5 Who then is Apollos, and who Paul? Ministering servants (διάκονος), through whom ye have believed, and as the Lord has given to each. Darby.....1Ti 4:6 Laying these things before the brethren, thou wilt be a good minister (διάκονος) of Christ Jesus, nourished with the words of the faith and of the good teaching which thou hast fully followed up. 1Ti 4:7 But profane and old wives' fables avoid, but exercise thyself unto piety;* Darby.

One of the aims of the Gospel is that all of God’s people will eventually become ministers, διάκονος, in some form of service to the brethren, *Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some,*

pastors and teachers; Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, ***for the work of the ministry (διάκονος*** *, for the edifying of the body of Christ*: **Ministers beget ministers**, and so the church is a body of service to itself. I like this version*, Eph 4:11 And he gave some as Apostles, and some, prophets; and some, preachers of the good news; and some to give care and teaching; Eph 4:12* ***For the training of the saints as servants in the church****, for the building up of the body of Christ*: BBE. Ask yourself, "How do I minister to the church?", anything or are you a "vampire" who just takes from others?

A person who ministers/serves the Christian assembly, by definition serves Christ, *Mat 25:45 Then shall he answer them, saying,* ***Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.*** *Mat 25:46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal*. I must try to see Jesus in front of me when I minister, but so often my view is a worldly one, like those disciples, and we don't recognise Him, *Mat 25:44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?* It does not matter what people think of us, and we should never try to be popular with men, but we should consider how pleasing to Jesus we are, and we should bear this in mind.

The mistake of not dwelling on Jesus is that we can get distracted by other voices calling to us, and our ministries will be slowly compromised and we will be drawn away from our purpose. They are like a body orbiting the sun, beholding the brightness, but being drawn away by a force that they fail to recognise, to wander, with no focus, in the darkness of their own imagination.

I am not saying anything against ministry, the broad sweep of service to Christ, and the more people who minister, from apostles to the simplest of Christ's children, the better off we shall be, and the greater service to Christ we shall perform. But the ministry is deteriorating due to people not having their focus on Christ, and we are finding things to do which we call ministry but these things do not have a basis in the faith of the word of God.

At the first level, we have ministry of the word, *Act 6:4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word*. This is what most people think of as the ministry, and I want to concentrate on this particular aspect of ministry. The downgrading of the Christian ministry has been going on for years, gradually eroding the truth of the Bible.

A "downgrade of the Christian ministry" refers to a perceived decline in the quality or faithfulness of Christian preaching and teaching, often characterized by a dilution of core biblical doctrines, a shift away from strict interpretations of scripture, and a compromise on essential Christian beliefs, most notably associated with the "Downgrade Controversy" led by Charles Spurgeon in the late 19th century where he criticised ministers who were allegedly watering down the gospel message to appeal to a wider audience.

In March 1887, Spurgeon published in his monthly magazine, The Sword and the Trowel, an article titled “The Down Grade.” The article, published anonymously but written by Spurgeon’s friend Robert Shindler, declared that some ministers were “denying the proper deity of the Son of God, renouncing faith in his atoning death……..” They were, Shindler said, on a slippery slope, or “Down Grade,” away from essential evangelical doctrines. But if Spurgeon had not “joined” with the Baptist Union, he wouldn’t have had to leave it and I think that the controversy would not have gone the way it did.

According to recent studies, a significant challenge facing the Christian preaching ministry in the 21st century is a declining Biblical literacy among churchgoers, with surveys showing a large portion of pastors lacking a fully "Biblical worldview," with only around **37%** demonstrating strong adherence to Biblical principles; this means many pastors hold a mix of religious and secular beliefs, impacting the depth of their preaching. Key points about 21st century Christian preaching statistics are:

Low Biblical Literacy:
A significant portion of church attendees lack in-depth knowledge of the Bible, leading to challenges in understanding and applying its teachings.
"Hybrid" Pastor Worldviews:
Studies indicate a majority of pastors hold a "hybrid" worldview, blending traditional Christian beliefs with secular perspectives, impacting their preaching style and content.
Social Issues and Activism:
Churches are increasingly addressing contemporary social issues in their preaching, aligning their messages with their stances on topics like climate change, racial justice, and LGBTQ+ rights.
Denominational Variations:
Different Christian denominations have varying approaches to preaching, with some focusing on more traditional interpretations of scripture while others embrace contemporary styles.

Do people seriously consider how Jesus views what they are saying? How can they preach on the non-biblical subjects, supporting the non-Christian world view? They are clearly not facing Christ or ministering to Him or they are are lying through their teeth. They are worldly, not born of the spirit, given over to the service of men, and not Christ, *Rom 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. Rom 16:18* ***For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly****; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple*.

I want to take a look at us, who minister week after week, and ask what is there to safeguard the churches in which we minister, to protect the people who we

minister to from our controlling influence. The reality is that ministers can be and sometimes are, a law unto themselves and are generally untouchable. There are rules for the members of a congregation but none for the minister.

Let me illustrate this from a church that I went to just after I became a believer. A lot of pressure was put upon me by the ministers (pastor and deacons) to join and become a member. I had some doubts about doing this, but it seemed alright as others had done it. We just do not know enough of the Bible to make an informed decision and yet we are asked to assent to rules which we may later reject, but that is how it is done. You ask people who are young converts to join you and they are generally ignorant and naïve as to what they are doing. Looking back some 50 years, I can see that I did not have the faintest idea about church membership and its implications. Brethren, take your time in weighing up the facts of a matter.

I do not want to paint this particular set up as evil, or the people who ministered as being careless of the people that they ministered to. They had adopted a denominational position and were approaching the subject from their position, and they had not thoroughly thought out the position from a Biblical perspective. They seem naive to me at this distance in time having had the luxury of 50 years to think it over. They gave me the church membership manual which I still have. In the introduction it says, ”you cannot belong effectively to that church without committal to a local fellowship”. That bold statement prepares the ground for what follows, and it is wrong because it has not even considered what a church is, and what a local fellowship is.

> No one person possesses all the gifts. They are distributed in the membership of the church. And as we are one together, recognising the need for each other, then the gifts are used for blessing of the church. That is the main reason why we become members of the church.

Except no one exhibited any gifts and people, although pleasant enough, didn’t have much to do with each other outside of the Sunday meeting, so that this reason for membership was spurious to say the least. But the main reason for not going along with what they said in their Membership book was that I was already a member of Christ’s church and I was not going to join a man’s church, *1Co 12:27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular*. But I digress from our focus which is the minister and leaving that detail aside, we move to the important matter of the pastor’s obligation to the flock.

There was nothing about the Responsibility of the minister/pastor in the Membership Handbook, but plenty was said about the Responsibilities of Members, including the responsibility for the “upkeep of the place of worship”, and the responsibility for the “support of the ministers of the word”. Keeping a building for a limited use is a vanity project, after all we have a home and I

wouldn't mind being financially supported to read while everyone was working their socks off to keep me idle. That alone is a big NO to membership.

But of greater importance is the lack of obligation on the minister. Why doesn't he or she, have a code of conduct, why doesn't he or she give an annual report, because if you have an obligation on the congregation you should have an obligation on the minister. But this is the way a non-scriptural church behaves, without accountability. Even worldly organisations and companies assess progress so why should it be any different among the brethren*, 1Ti 5:17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine*. This is making an assessment of ministers.

The commitment to a Biblically based ministry is not stated. I raised number of issues at this church and was told although I was 99.9% right, the minister was **not** going to do anything about it. This church had among its rules that,

> Should the pastor be desirous of leaving, or should ¾ of the members wish to separate the pastor from them, three months notice shall be given.

It does not require ¾ of the church to establish the matter. This is not Biblical, the Bible does not require more than 2 people to establish a matter, *Mat 18:15 If one of my followers sins against you, go and point out what was wrong. But do it in private, just between the two of you. If that person listens, you have won back a follower. Mat 18:16 But if that one refuses to listen, take along one or two others. The Scriptures teach that every complaint must be proven true by two or more witnesses. Mat 18:17 If the follower refuses to listen to them, report the matter to the church. Anyone who refuses to listen to the church must be treated like an unbeliever or a tax collector*. CEV. Solving problems is quick and simple, and ministers need to be aware of this rule, and it keeps the minister in line.

Additionally a minister must answer questions if raised, so allow time for this in public discussion. Christ's ministry was like a big "question and answer" session. Jesus never held back on any truth of God, but publicly and unashamedly spoke to people who questioned Him, and gave answers. His ministers must do the same, *Tit 1:9 They must stick to the true message they were taught, so that **their good teaching can help others and correct everyone who opposes it**.* If he doesn't know the answer to a question, that is alright, he cannot be expected to know everything, but he should seek an answer with the help of the fellowship.

Ministerial conduct must also be beyond reproach, *Tit 1:6 they must have a good reputation and be faithful in marriage. Their children must be followers of the Lord and not have a reputation for being wild and disobedient. Tit 1:7 Church officials are in charge of God's work, and so they must also have a good reputation. They must not be bossy, quick-tempered, heavy drinkers, bullies, or dishonest in business. Tit 1:8 Instead, they must be friendly to strangers and*

enjoy doing good things. They must also be sensible, fair, pure, and self-controlled. Tit 1:9 They must stick to the true message they were taught, so that their good teaching can help others and correct everyone who opposes it. Tit 1:10 There are many who don't respect authority, and they fool others by talking nonsense. This is especially true of some Jewish followers.....1Ti 3:2 That's why officials must have a good reputation and be faithful in marriage. They must be self-controlled, sensible, well-behaved, friendly to strangers, and able to teach. 1Ti 3:3 They must not be heavy drinkers or troublemakers. Instead, they must be kind and gentle and not love money. 1Ti 3:4 Church officials must be in control of their own families, and they must see that their children are obedient and always respectful. 1Ti 3:5 If they don't know how to control their own families, how can they look after God's people? 1Ti 3:6 They must not be new followers of the Lord. If they are, they might become proud and be doomed along with the devil. 1Ti 3:7 Finally, they must be well-respected by people who are not followers. Then they won't be trapped and disgraced by the devil.

To avoid the temptations of the age they should adopt good practice, like the Billy Graham Rule which is a code of conduct that evangelical Protestant leaders follow to avoid being alone with women they are not married to. The rule is intended to prevent sexual temptation and accusations of sexual harassment or assault.

The minister is not above the people and should not make pretence of being more holy. We saw that they are equally failing according to the statistics I quoted in a previous ministry. The position which we elevate them to, contributes, I think, to their isolation and they do not bring their faults to public scrutiny. Although the minister is held to high standards, he is equally sinful and we should have such fellowship with him that we are all openly confessing our sins together, Share your shortcomings with others, *Jas 5:16* ***Confess your faults one to another****, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*. I like this version, *Jas 5:16 So be sure to admit to one another where you have deviated fromod's design, and request God's intervention and treatment plan for each other, so that you may be healed. The request of a person who lives in unity with God is powerful and effective.* Remedy.

We need to get out of the habit of false piety because this life is a battle with sin, and if we are honest and open, we are more likely as a body to overcome it, together. I do have a genuine sympathy for ministers who struggle in isolation, not being able to share with God's people. But that is part and parcel of the church system that we have brought into existence.

The ministers arose from the church, from the local assembly and are not parachuted in to a church, *Tit 1:5 I left you in Crete to do what had been left undone and* ***to appoint leaders for the churches in each town****. As I told you, Tit 1:6 they must have a good reputation and be faithful in marriage. Their*

children must be followers of the Lord and not have a reputation for being wild and disobedient. If the ministers are known to the assembly, in the town where they live, we would already know a lot about them, and they could not hide in anonymity.

The training ground for those who minister is the family; *Tit 1:6 they must have a good reputation and be faithful in marriage. Their children must be followers of the Lord and not have a reputation for being wild and disobedient*. We ought to hold to these standards and accept nothing less, because if we accept less, we are the cause of our own downgrade.

The foundation of the minister is Jesus Christ, the charter of our liberty is the Bible, the word of God. If we do not accept these two things, then we are not Christians and we should get out of the Church.

88. Servitude

Preparatory reading: Exodus Chapter 2

Let me start by saying that the Law, all of the Law, the laws in every detail, teaches us something about Jesus. We think that the Law is just as set of regulations for us humans, but the basis of those regulations is the image of Jesus. If the Tabernacle shows in a type, in a shadow, then the Glory of Jesus, the structure of Jesus in heaven, if you will, the very golden "bones" of Jesus, the Law shows us the personal qualities of Jesus, the essential make up of the personality of God. It shows to us in a personal way, the character of the Divine "Image of God".

The law of "servants" was not about men, firstly it was about the Son of God, Jesus. It was necessary that we learned about Him so that we might become like Him, a servant. Men revered the laws, such as the Sabbath, but Jesus was Greater than the law of the Sabbath and Greater than the Temple, *Mat 12:5 Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? Mat 12:6 But I say unto you,* ***That in this place is one greater than the temple****. Mat 12:7 But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. Mat 12:8* ***For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.***

Let us read what Moses says about the servant, *Exo 21:1 Now these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them. Exo 21:2* ***If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.*** *Exo 21:3 If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he*

were married, then his wife shall go out with him. Exo 21:4 If his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. Exo 21:5 And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; ***I will not go out free:*** *Exo 21:6 Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring* ***him to the door, or unto the door post****; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever. Exo 21:7 And if a man sell his daughter to be a maidservant, she shall not go out as the menservants do. Exo 21:8 If she please not her master, who hath betrothed her to himself, then shall he let her be redeemed: to sell her unto a strange nation he shall have no power, seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her. Exo 21:9 And if he have betrothed her unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters. Exo 21:10 If he take him another wife; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish. Exo 21:11 And if he do not these three unto her, then shall she go out free without money*.

We do not understand servitude today, being a slave if you will, and that is in part because we have a safety net of welfare and pensions, such that we scarce notice such things as want and deprivation, at least in this country. We are still slaves but to a different system. A slave or servant is viewed very differently by us. It is considered to be someone who has no freedom, is oppressed and downtrodden, and forced to work continually for an oppressive master. The black African slave was one of these oppressed persons we call to mind and we say that it was a terrible abuse of human beings.

Of course, we fail to mention in the litany of abuse, the Arab slave trade which took far more slaves than the Atlantic slave trade, the internal slave trade where Africans held their brothers as slaves, which continued into the 20th century, and that it was the Christians who fought against the abuse. The British Empire was the first to pass the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act in 1807. This led to the Slavery Abolition Act, (1833) an, act of Parliament that abolished slavery in most British colonies, freeing more than 800,000 enslaved Africans in the Caribbean and South Africa as well as a small number in Canada. America did not abolish slavery until 1865, with the 13th amendment. Slavery was cruel but Biblical slavery had rules which were designed to remove the abuses.

“Millions of migrant workers work as servants in foreign lands today; many suffer hardships and even abuse. In ancient Israel, God gave rules to ensure that servants were treated justly. In this passage we find some basic principles. If someone became bankrupt and owed money, it was possible in ancient economies for the debt to be settled by the bankrupt person working as a servant for the creditor. In this way, he was also provided with daily necessities such as food and shelter. There was some good in this arrangement, but it could be abused, as it often was. To prevent abuses, God’s Law stipulated that such a servant was indebted for six years, after which he was free. If a man offered his daughter as “payment” for his debt, the Law, again, guarded the rights of the woman. God’s Law not only prevented abuses but pointed to a better way: it

promoted goodness and kindness in the way servants were to be treated. For example, a master could let his servant have a family, thus treating him with dignity. A master could treat his servant so well that the servant may voluntarily choose to remain in his master's service for life instead of leaving as a free man after six years—indicated by piercing his ear."

This was a highly enlightened treatment of servants, and it took a long time before England had anything like these laws. If you had no money you were at the mercy of man and the poor had no rights. The Hebrews had rights under God, and the right to live was one of them, and a good worker was worth having, *Luk 10:7 And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: **for the labourer is worthy of his hire**. Go not from house to house. Luk 10:8 And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you*. If, for whatever reason poverty had come upon you, you could put yourself in servitude, voluntary slavery. It was much more progressive than modern slavery, for example the slavery that occurred in the United States. It had in addition to being voluntary servitude, a statute of limitations that extended the period to a maximum of 6 years, unless the person liked his master so much he became his servant for life.

The way the person became a perpetual servant was by have his ear bored with an awl, to the post of a door. He word for door post is = מְזוּזָהmezuzah. It is also the name of a piece of parchment inscribed with specific Hebrew verses from the Torah, the Law, which Jews fix to the door posts of their homes. These verses are the Biblical passages in which the use of a **mezuzah** is commanded (Deuteronomy 6:4–9 and 11:18–21); they also form part of the Shema prayer, "Hear O Israel".

1. *Deu 6:4 **Hear, O Israel**: The LORD our God is one LORD: Deu 6:5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. Deu 6:6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: Deu 6:7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Deu 6:8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. Deu 6:9 And thou shalt write them upon **the posts** (*מְזוּזָה*) of thy house, and on thy gates*.

2. *Deu 11:18 Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. Deu 11:19 And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Deu 11:20 And thou shalt write them upon **the door posts** (*מְזוּזָה*) of thine house, and upon thy gates: Deu 11:21 That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.*

The door posts *(מְזוּזָה),* holds a significant position in the Jewish traditions,

1. *Exo 12:7 And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts (מְזוּזָה) and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.*
2. *Exo 21:6 Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post (מְזוּזָה); and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever.*
3. *Deu 11:19 And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Deu 11:20 And thou shalt write them upon the door posts (מְזוּזָה) of thine house, and upon thy gates*:

The place where you became a perpetual slave was the place where you wrote the law and the place where the Passover blood was marked, on the door post. I wonder whether that servant who had his ears pierced was also marked with the blood of the Passover sacrifice from the door post, and when getting his ear pierced saw the verses of the law? It also showed that all in the property were covered by the blood and the Law.

In its primary application to Jesus, He is the forerunner into the House of God, *Heb 9:24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us*: He is the true Servant, the One who obeyed His Father, the one whose ear was pierced, the true Passover.

The secondary application is applied to us. If we have (1) the blood of the Passover, Christ our Passover slain for us, (2) the pierced ear to hear the word of God, the obedience of faith, (3) the word of God, the law in our hearts, then we shall go in to God's house, His holy Temple, the Fathers House in which there are many abodes, and the Destroyer will pass over us. If we just assent that these things are true but do not attempt to acquire them, we shall be forever lost. Hearing about them is not good enough!

A verse which I think is relevant to this story is found in, *Psa 40:6 Sacrifices and offerings are not what please you; gifts and payment for sin are not what you demand. But* ***you made me willing to listen and obey****. CEV.....Psa 40:6 (40:7) Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire;* ***but thou hast pierced ears for me****. Burnt offering and sin offering thou didst not require: DRB*. "Ears you have digged for me" is a perfectly good translation, from the Hebrew כָּרָה = karah which means to bore, open, or dig.

Now you might think that you had heard this in the New Testament, and you would be right. Compare, *Psa 40:6 Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire;* ***mine ears hast thou opened****: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Psa 40:7 Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, Psa 40:8 I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my*

heart….. with…… *Heb 10:5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not,* ***but a body hast thou prepared me****: Heb 10:6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Heb 10:7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.*

It differs from the Hebrew of the Old Testament, but it is the same verses. Why? The author of Hebrews is quoting here (as elsewhere) from the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures known as the Septuagint (or LXX). The Septuagint translates the verse as: *Psa 40:6 Sacrifice and present You have not desired, || **But a body You have prepared for me**, || Burnt and sin-offering You have not asked. Psa 40:7 Then I said, "Behold, I have come, || **In the roll of the scroll** it is written of me, Psa 40:8 I have delighted to do Your pleasure, my God, || And Your law [is] within my heart.*" LSV.

The author of Hebrews didn't change anything. He simply quoted from the translation his readers were already familiar with, a translation that had been produced by Jewish scholars long before the time of the New Testament. But how then, did the Septuagint translators come to this seemingly odd rendering? Translated literally, the Hebrew words mean "you have dug out ears for me." This literal rendering is indicated in the footnotes of translations like the original 1611 KJV. What exactly does it mean that God "dug out ears?"

How did we go from "ears you have digged me" to "a body you have prepared me"? I will venture a guess that they are the same thing. The image is of the faithful loving servant, coming to the door posts and being made a perpetual servant, *Mat 12:16 And charged them that they should not make him known: Mat 12:17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Mat 12:18* ***Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased:*** *I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles*.

If Jesus was the archetype of the faithful servant, the one who listens and obeys, He also had a body prepared for Him that would show the same obedience. The two versions of scripture are a paraphrase, saying the same thing, whether an "ear" or a "body", the whole outcome was a faithful servant, one who in the very same place where God wants Him, at the door posts, the מְזוּזָה on the threshold of the house of God, He was the Sacrifice of the Passover with a body prepared, He was the Law written and remembered, and He was the listener of God, with His ears dug out. Every man must come through those doors, מְזוּזָה or be lost eternally, and as is the master so is the servant, we go through on His terms or we don't go through at all.

So we have gone from a law which seems to have an earthly meaning, the law of a servant, but its highest meaning is found in Christ. Its like the laws concerning animals, *1Co 9:9 Moses' Teachings say, "Never muzzle an ox when it is threshing grain." God's concern isn't for oxen. 1Co 9:10 Isn't he speaking*

entirely for our benefit? This was written for our benefit so that the person who plows or threshes should expect to receive a share of the crop. 1Co 9:11 If we have planted the spiritual seed that has been of benefit to you, is it too much if we receive part of the harvest from your earthly goods? GW. The basic laws had a higher meaning found in Christ.

The second part of the law of servitude relates to the women, *Exo 21:7 A young woman who was sold by her father doesn't gain her freedom in the same way that a man does. Exo 21:8 If she doesn't please the man who bought her to be his wife, he must let her be bought back. He cannot sell her to foreigners; this would break the contract he made with her. Exo 21:9 If he selects her as a wife for his son, he must treat her as his own daughter. Exo 21:10 If the man later marries another woman, he must continue to provide food and clothing for the one he bought and to treat her as a wife. Exo 21:11 If he fails to do any of these things, she must be given her freedom without cost*. CEV.

I think the woman servant is in the highest form, the bride of Christ, therefore she gains her meaning from Christ too. The woman is destined to be a wife of the man who owns her. Her rights are considerable, she was redeemable in the event the buyer did not play his part, he could not let her go to a foreigner, she was to have the privilege of a daughter if she was to marry the son of the buyer and her portion was not diminished if the man took another wife. Failure in these resulted in her freedom.

89. Servants to Sons. Part 1

Preparatory reading: Deuteronomy Chapter 32

We saw Jesus as typifying faithful service in the law, and by this He set the standard for each of us as servants of God. How did you become a servant of God? It was by switching your allegiance from the world to the Lord, but it was exchanging one form of bondage for another form of bondage, from one Lord to another Lord. The process by which it occurred initially was the Exodus from Egypt, when the Egyptian slaves, mostly descendents of Jacob, became the nation of Israel, the birth of Israel.

The condition of servitude was imposed upon them in their “national infancy” until Christ came into the world, *Gal 4:1 Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; Gal 4:2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Gal 4:3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: Gal 4:4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, Gal 4:5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. Gal 4:6 And because*

ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Gal 4:7 ***Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ****.*

The Old Testament people had switched allegiance from one master to another, but they were under obligations which were solemnly binding upon them, *Deu 7:6 For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. Deu 7:7* ***The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people****: Deu 7:8 But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt*.

They were bound by a covenant, an agreement which had obligations upon both parties. It was not a uni-lateral agreement where all the responsibilities fell upon God, it was bi-lateral, *Exo 19:4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Exo 19:5* ***Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant****, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: Exo 19:6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel*.

The Israelites were chosen out of all the families of the earth to be a redeemed people, *Exo 6:6 Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: Exo 6:7* ***And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God****: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.....Deu 10:12 And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, Deu 10:13 To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? Deu 10:14 Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Deu 10:15* ***Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day***.

They were to be the representatives of God to the world as God had promised Abraham, *Gen 12:2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: Gen 12:3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*. However, this nation did not really engage in missions, they were not rampant evangelicals although some were, as Scripture says, *Mat 23:15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!* ***for ye***

compass sea and land to make one proselyte*, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves*.

Primarily the Jews, although they were a mixed multitude from Egypt, tended to focus their efforts regarding religion on Israel, with some exceptions, *Mar 7:25 A woman whose daughter had an evil spirit in her heard where Jesus was. And right away she came and knelt down at his feet. Mar 7:26 The woman was Greek and had been born in the part of Syria known as Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to force the demon out of her daughter. Mar 7:27 But Jesus said, "The children must first be fed! It isn't right to take away their food and feed it to dogs." Mar 7:28 The woman replied, "Lord, even dogs eat the crumbs that children drop from the table." Mar 7:29 Jesus answered, "That's true! You may go now. The demon has left your daughter."* CEV.

The problem with Israel was that it hadn't got rid of its pagan ideas and in their fuddled mysticism, had rejected the Saviour, *Joh 1:11 He came unto his own, and* ***his own received him not***. One can understand why people like J N Darby argued that the first coming of Christ was part of God's redemptive plan for Israel, but because the Jews rejected Christ, salvation was then offered to the Gentiles. Darby was now faced with the dilemma of how to resolve the relationship between the church and Israel as part of God's redemptive plan, but that is another subject.

The wayward Israelites were not all true Israelites, *Rom 9:6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect.* ***For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel****: Rom 9:7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. Rom 9:8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God****: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed***. We see that the nation of Israel had within it another Israel, one which did not function according to natural laws, additionally, one which did not function according to natural birth.

This small group of people is called a remnant, the remainder of the people of Israel. As a nation, Israel could be viewed as a massive sandy shore, a beach whose grains could not be numbered, yet take a bucket of that sand, the leftovers, and you have an idea of the number of true Israelites that God was going to save, *Rom 9:27 Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of* ***the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved.*** John the Baptist taught this in no uncertain words, *Mat 3:9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham*.

There was in Israel two groups of people, the ordinary Israelite by birth and the Israelite that had been chosen by God, and I might say, who had been born of God, **born again**. This thing was not even considered by the Pharisee Nicodemus, *Joh 3:7 Don't be surprised when I say that you must be born from above. Joh 3:8 Only God's Spirit gives new life. The Spirit is like the wind that*

blows wherever it wants to. You can hear the wind, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. Joh 3:9 "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. Joh 3:10 ***Jesus replied: How can you be a teacher of Israel and not know these things***? CEV. The Lord is amazed that a teacher of Israel did not know the very thing which he ought to have known and taught, for the benefit of the people, the new birth. What on earth were the Pharisees teaching? Yes, this was still in the Old Testament not the New Testament, and the Jews were expected to know the New Birth, born from above.

All of the Israelites who died not knowing this new birth, were lost eternally, the generations of Israel, from the thousands that perished in the wilderness, the thousands during the time of the Judges, the false worshippers of Israel during the time of the Kings, a massive sand bank of unbelief, out of which a bucket of sand was taken, remnant, a remainder were left. The number saved might also be called a drop in the ocean, a pimple on a pie crust!

Far from being a highly successful nation under God, an example to the world of what a nation who served God looked like, Israel the nation, constantly showed the opposite, with a few exceptions, namely Phinehas, *Num 25:6 And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. Num 25:7 And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; Num 25:8 And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly.* ***So the plague was stayed*** *from the children of Israel. Num 25:9* ***And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand****.*

Far from being a Holy nation, Israel was a caricature of a Holy nation, a hypocritical nation, one to be quick to condemn others but taking no heed itself of the high principals of God. Their use of the law that God gave them, was weaponised and turned into something with which to beat others. The command to love God and to love your neighbours did not result in godly actions of service. To love, does not mean to just hold an attitude but **to serve** others, *Rom 12:17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. Rom 12:18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Rom 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Rom 12:20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Rom 12:21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good*.

Israel was like the churches of today. They have their rubric, their ceremonies, their factions, their leadership, and their traditions which **do not** point to Christ and His word **as having supreme governance over them**. They partially acknowledged Him, just enough to retain the title “Christian” but the religion is

manmade and controlled by man. God had felt it necessary in the Old Testament to introduce severe measures whereby men would come to see that they were not following Him. This came about with “curses” and “blessings” according to whether or not they obeyed Him. The Bible Project has quite a good definition of a curse, “In the Bible, the curse is when God hands people over to the consequences of seizing blessing on their own terms. It is a curse because, instead of abundance and life, we end up with scarcity, isolation, and death.”

An example of the curse at work is seen in Romans, *Rom 1:22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, Rom 1:23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Rom 1:24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Rom 1:25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen*. People who seized the blessing of God’s image and turned it on its head, were given over to God’s curse, and eventually death.

Deu 27:12 After you cross the Jordan River, you will go to Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. The tribes of Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin will go up on Mount Gerizim, where they will bless the people of Israel. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali will go up on Mount Ebal where they will agree to the curses……Deu 27:14 The people of the Levi tribe will speak each curse in a loud voice, then the rest of the people will agree to that curse by saying, "Amen!" Here are the curses: ***We ask the LORD to put a curse on anyone*** *who makes an idol or worships idols, even secretly. The LORD is disgusted with idols.* ***We ask the LORD to put a curse on all*** *who do not show respect for their father and mother. We* ***ask the LORD to put a curse on anyone*** *who moves the rocks that mark property lines.* ***We ask the LORD to put a curse on anyone*** *who tells blind people to go the wrong way.* ***We ask the LORD to put a curse on anyone*** *who keeps the poor from getting justice, whether these poor are foreigners, widows, or orphans****. We ask the LORD to put a curse on any man*** *who sleeps with his father's wife; that man has shown no respect for his father's marriage.* ***We ask the LORD to put a curse on anyone*** *who has sex with an animal.* ***We ask the LORD to put a curse on any man*** *who sleeps with his sister or his half sister or his mother-in-law.* ***We ask the LORD to put a curse on anyone*** *who commits murder, even when there are no witnesses to the crime.* ***We ask the LORD to put a curse on anyone*** *who accepts money to murder an innocent victim.* ***We ask the LORD to put a curse on anyone who refuses to obey his laws****. And so, to each of these curses, the people will answer, "Amen!"* CEV.

The people had agreed, said “Amen!” to the curses which they had invoked upon themselves. If anyone was guilty of this crime, the crime of lawlessness he was cursed and he suffered physically for it. Blessings though it is not stated would come from the reverse of these activities, for example we would say, “*Here are the blessings:* ***We ask the LORD to put a blessing on anyone*** *who does not*

make an idol who does not worship idols, even secretly." If you did not do the word of God, you could see in the nation of Israel, the curses of God descend upon them.

Now what of the New Testament, do we see this same "curse and blessing" come upon the people of God, namely the church of the Jew and Gentile? I think that we do, *1Co 6:9 Don't you know that evil people won't have a share in the blessings of God's kingdom? Don't fool yourselves! No one who is immoral or worships idols or is unfaithful in marriage or is a pervert or behaves like a homosexual 1Co 6:10 will share in God's kingdom. Neither will any thief or greedy person or drunkard or anyone who curses and cheats others. 1Co 6:11 Some of you used to be like that. But now the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the power of God's Spirit have washed you and made you holy and acceptable to God*. CEV.

The two Israel's still exist in the church, the people who generally associate with that religion and the people who have truly believed, the ones going on to inherit the kingdom, "***For they are not all the church, which are of the church***", or to paraphrase it again, after all not all of the people who go to church are the true people of God. Not all of the people who say they are God's servants are really God's servants.

There is no doubt at all, because our Lord Jesus teaches it, that not all are saved. This means that some of the people that we know, who say they are Christians, who go to church week after week, that engage in good works, are not Christ's people and will not go to heaven. There are two types of "Christian", genuine and false. We make our efforts in all things to be genuine Christians.

90. Servants to Sons. Part 2

Preparatory reading: Galatians Chapter 3. Darby.

When God speaks to the people of Israel, He makes no distinction between those people He has truly called and those people that He has not, between the elect and the damned, *Deu 5:1 And Moses **called all Israel**, and said unto them, **Hear, O Israel**, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them*. That call of God to "hear" will fall on deaf ears, *Deu 29:4 Yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day*. It is a single message to both groups. The elect and the damned are addressed with the same message that only the elect will heed.

At the conclusion to the parable of the sower our Lord says, *Mat 13:9 **Who hath ears to hear, let him hear**.* Why did He say that? Because the word was not to everyone, it was to people "who had ears", *Mat 13:11 Jesus answered: I have*

explained the secrets about the kingdom of heaven to you, but not to others. Mat 13:12 Everyone who has something will be given more. But people who don't have anything will lose even what little they have. Mat 13:13 I use stories when I speak to them because when they look, they cannot see, ***and when they listen, they cannot hear or understand****. Mat 13:14 So God's promise came true, just as the prophet Isaiah had said, "These people will listen and listen, but never understand. They will look and look, but never see. Mat 13:15 All of them have stubborn minds! Their ears are stopped up, and their eyes are covered****. They cannot see or hear or understand****. If they could, they would turn to me, and I would heal them." Mat 13:16 But God has blessed you, because* ***your eyes can see and your ears can hear****! Mat 13:17 Many prophets and good people were eager to see what you see and to hear what you hear.* ***But I tell you that they did not see or hear***. CEV. It is a message from God to all Jews, although only the elect will hear it, because they have ears to heed it.

God broadcasts the message to all, scatters the word, but the message is not understood by all. He does not say “Hear O Israel, I have a message for the chosen ones only” or “Hear O Israel, I have a message for you lawbreakers”. He sometimes does not distinguish between the elect and reprobate in His dealings with the nation, and all suffer the same, as in the captivity, when the people were exiled. Daniel was taken into captivity and suffered with the people, the righteous and unrighteous together, collateral damage in the big picture of life.

Do we know which camp we are in, the camp of the elect whose names are written in heaven, or the camp of the damned in hell? It seems that we are not always sure because of our sin, and it is this uncertainty which drives us on to “make our calling and election sure”, so that we are, *1Pe 1:9Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls*. Paul Rogers said, “Its not about wishing wells, its about finishing well”.

The Israelites thought that they were all saved by virtue of their lineage to Abraham, just as today many take their christening, as an introduction and a certainty of life in Christ and that because of it they think that they will get to heaven. But you don’t get to heaven if you are a lawless outlaw, as the verses in 1 Corinthians Chapter 6 tell us. Neither do you go to heaven by the works of the law either, *Gal 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them*. How then do we get to heaven for we cannot do the law and we are unrighteous sinners?

We are saved because of Christ, solo Christo, in Christ alone, in none other by none other. Saved from the curse of the law and from all curses, *Gal 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. Gal 3:11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. Gal 3:12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Gal 3:13* ***Christ hath***

redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: *for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: Gal 3:14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith*.

It might be considered that the Lord calls Israel from heaven but only His people who are destined to go to heaven hear Him, and the other Israelites on earth just cannot understand Him. Like the men on the Damascus road with Saul, who heard the sound of the voice but did not understand the meaning. This isn't farfetched, for consider the Tabernacle, the Tent of the Meeting. It had its origin in heaven, *Exo 25:8 And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. Exo 25:9 According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.* It already existed in heaven where God's throne was, but the issue of whether they would understand the meaning of it on the earth depended on whether they had eyes and ears made in heaven and not upon earth.

Having established that the Scripture teaches that some men can be associated with God's covenant, yet not believe it and others, a remnant, do believe it, we also find that in consequence some will serve God and other will not serve God. Some will turn out good servants, some bad servants, *Mat 25:20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. Mat 25:21 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord*.

Others will turn out slothful, *Mat 25:26 His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed*: and the consequences for that type of servant is, *Mat 25:30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*.

In the progression from a natural Israelite to a spiritual Israelite, from a servant to a son, one must have ones heart circumcised, to show that you have taken on the covenant obligations*, Deu 10:16 Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.* How do you do this, well you repent and God undertakes the rest, *Deu 30:1 And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee, Deu 30:2* ***And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day****, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; Deu 30:3 That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee. Deu 30:4 If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from*

thence will he fetch thee: Deu 30:5 And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. Deu 30:6 ***And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul****, that thou mayest live*.

So the definition of a Jew or Israelite becomes, *Rom 2:28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: Rom 2:29* ***But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart****, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God*. The Jews may have lived their lives without foreskins but never once saw that this was supposed to be a sign of a much deeper relationship with God, a heart healthy relationship in the spirit. The word must enter them as it did John, *Rev 10:9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. Rev 10:10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and* ***it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter****.*

(Please read the whole of Galatians Chapter 3). This is what Paul talks about in his letter to the Galatians, *Gal 3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. Gal 3:22 but the scripture has shut up all things under sin, that the promise, on the principle of faith of Jesus Christ, should be given to those that believe. Gal 3:23 But before faith came, we were guarded under law, shut up to faith which was about to be revealed. Gal 3:24 So that the law has been our tutor up to Christ, that we might be justified on the principle of faith. Gal 3:25 But, faith having come, we are no longer under a tutor; Gal 3:26* ***for ye are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus***.

I will briefly comment on those verses. Salvation and all of the promises of God were given to us by faith in Christ, not by the law. We could not attain to righteousness by the law, as it is written, *Gal 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. Gal 3:11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for,* ***The just shall live by faith***.

What function did the law play, since it could not make us righteous and it certainly could not save us? *Gal 3:23 The Law controlled us and kept us under its power until the time came when we would have faith*. CEV. **The law kept us in check until faith was revealed** in us, it showed us our sinful nature, *Rom 7:7 Does this mean that the Law is sinful? Certainly not! But if it had not been for the Law, I would not have known what sin is really like. For example, I would not have known what it means to want something that belongs to someone else, unless the Law had told me not to do that. Rom 7:8 It was sin that used this*

command as a way of making me have all kinds of desires. But without the Law, sin is dead. CEV.

The law was a tutor, a trainer, literally a pedagogue, to keep us in check against the excesses of our flesh until we came to Christ by faith, *Gal 3:24 In fact, the Law was our teacher. It was supposed to teach us until we had faith and were acceptable to God*. CEV. I used to see this verse in a historical context, with the Israelites growing up as a nation and eventually, when Christ came into the world, they no longer needed the law, for they had Christ. This view gives Christ no role to play among the Israelites before He was manifest in the flesh. It is just a sequence of national events but I see it differently now. Christ was always present, in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

I now see every Israelite having that personal confrontation with Christ. Yes, in the Old Testament, having been under tutorship of the law, coming to a point of acceptance or rejection of Him. Let me explain. Christ was there with God in the beginning with God, *Joh 1:1* ***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God****. Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God. Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made*. The Word came into our world as a man, but had existed with the Father forever, *Joh 1:14* ***And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us****, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. Joh 1:15 John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.*

By some powerful mystery, Jesus existed from the beginning and was the very God, such that I do not think it wrong to call Him Jehovah Jesus, or Jehovah Saves. If Jehovah Saves, the people of Israel must have known who He was and they either looked to Him for their Salvation, or rejected Him, *1Sa 8:6 And the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed to Jehovah. 1Sa 8:7* ***And Jehovah said to Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people*** *in all that they say unto thee:* ***for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them****. 1Sa 8:8 According to all the deeds that they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, in that they have forsaken me and served other gods, so do they also unto thee*. Darby. There was no other Saviour than Jehovah Jesus, then and now.

All of these earthly Israelites, bound by the Law, rejected Jehovah and died under the Law. Those who accepted Jehovah, bound to Him for justification, bound to Him by faith, were the sons of God, *Joh 1:12* ***But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God****, even to them that believe on his name: Joh 1:13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*. **I do not take it to be only the New T**estament **saints but the Old T**estament **saints as well**, *Joh 1:9 That was the true Light,* ***which lighteth every man that cometh into the world****. Joh*

1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. Joh 1:11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

The transition from a law based Israelite to the faith based Israelite in Jehovah, I say, was their conversion under the Old Testament. The moment they stopped trying to do the law and became servants of Jehovah, that was the conversion experience, *Gal 3:24 So that the law has been our tutor up to Christ, that we might be justified on the principle of faith. Gal 3:25 But, faith having come, we are no longer under a tutor; Gal 3:26* ***for ye are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus***. The moment the Israelite exercised faith, he became a **son of God**. Here he moved from a servant to a son.

We miss this in our quest for "easy believism", our shallow salvation, our "come up to the altar rail and accept Jesus". Jesus is not a soft biscuit to be received and eaten so that from that time, everything is plain sailing. Jesus is hard to swallow, the kingdom is not easily apprehended, *Mat 11:12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force*.

When you come to Christ, it is because you are labouring under the law, you have been brought under that stern tutor to learn the discipline of the law, and having learned and failed, you turn to Christ, *Rom 7:22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: Rom 7:23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Rom 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Rom 7:25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. Rom 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

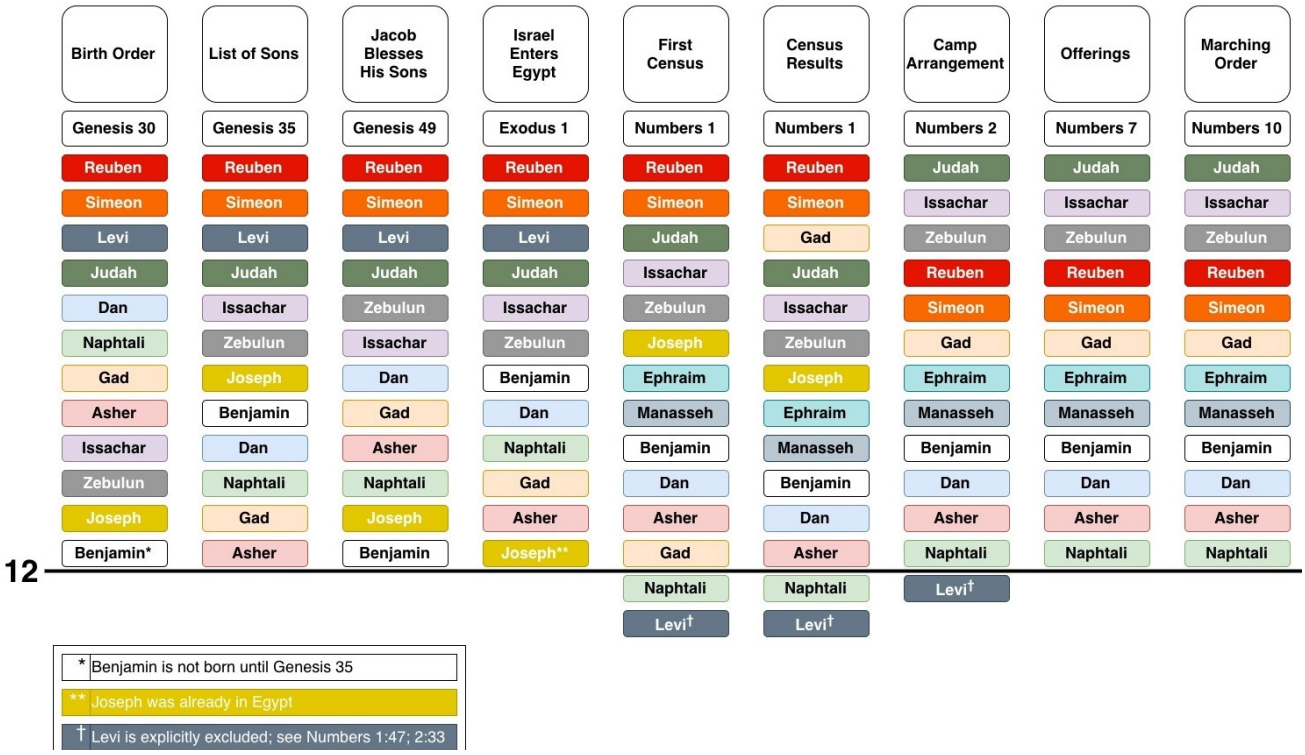
What did you know about sin when you think that you came to Christ? I imagine, as in most cases, next to nothing. I think that this shows us that far more is required until we reach the goal of heaven

91. The Blessings on the Servant Sons

Preparatory reading: Genesis Chapter 49 and Deuteronomy Chapter 33

I don't know whether you have noticed, but there are many variants of the twelve tribes in Scripture. By variants, I mean differing orders of the sons and different sons which make up the "twelve". I am indebted to the **Verse Notes** web site for the following chart,

https://versenotes.org/tribes-of-israel-chart/



The Lord pronounced different blessings upon the family of Jacob at different times in their lives, why? The blessings occur in Genesis Chapters 29 and 49, and Deuteronomy Chapter 33. The first list in Genesis Chapter 29 is in birth order, from first born to last. This is chronological and important for inheritance. The second list in Genesis Chapter 49 is sorted by birth mother. This is structured around the relationship that Jacob had with the women who gave birth to these sons. The third list in Deuteronomy is roughly sorted by position in the camp.

The western tribes together, the northern tribes, etc. and this is structured around the relationship between the tribes and the Temple of God.

As you can see the order of the 12 changes and there are more than “twelve tribes” because there are more people in the family who are reckoned as tribal heads, for example, Ephraim and Manasseh, who are included in the “twelve tribes”. Also, the tribal list drops some tribes and includes others, still keeping the overall number as 12, and this continues throughout history. Poor Dinah does not get to be a tribe! The twelve tribes are named at least nineteen times in Scripture. Here are some of the significant ones:

- When the patriarchs of the tribes are born (Genesis 30, except Benjamin, who isn’t born until Genesis 35)
- When Jacob blesses his sons (Genesis 49)
- When Moses blesses the tribes (Deuteronomy 33)
- When Ezekiel sees the gates of the city (Ezekiel 48)
- When John lists the twelve thousand sealed from each tribe (Revelation 7)

These lists are not consistent in order *or in number*.

What are we to make of this? I will suggest that the number 12 is a sacred number. *Exo 24:4 And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars,* ***according to the twelve tribes of Israel***. The 12 tribes are representative of Israel and can consist of any grouping of the heads of the family, they are the twelve tribes, in any order and however distributed, they still make “twelve tribes”. 12 + 2 = 12 in respect to the tribes of Israel.

Some say that the “12” were symbolic of the government of Israel and they certainly are set up to judge the people. I think that the “12”were primarily symbolic of service **TO** God. Take the 12 loaves in the Tabernacle, the showbread or the bread of the presence, were the 12 loaves representing **God’s food** or **food for God’s people**? Where were the loaves directed, for heaven or for earth? I think that they were God’s food, *Lev 24:5 Use your finest flour to bake twelve loaves of bread about four pounds each, Lev 24:6 then take them into the sacred tent and lay them on the gold table in two rows of six loaves. Lev 24:7 Alongside each row put some pure incense that will be sent up by fire in place of the bread as an offering to me. Lev 24:8 Aaron must lay fresh loaves on the table each Sabbath, and priests in all generations must continue this practice as part of Israel's agreement with me. Lev 24:9* ***This bread will always belong to Aaron and his family****;* ***it is very holy because it was offered to me****, and it must be eaten in a holy place*. CEV.

By this practice, the shewbread was offered to God, the priests eating it on behalf of God, and it is symbolic of giving yourself, regularly, totally, as a living sacrifice, *Rom 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies* ***a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,***

which is your reasonable service. We give ourselves to God by being "in Christ" and the loaves represent the results of good seed and a full harvest.

What is the relationship between the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 Apostles? Do the twelve tribes get replaced by the twelve apostles? Jesus said that the apostles would be the ones in charge of the kingdom, *Mat 19:27 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? Mat 19:28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration* ***when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel***. *Mat 19:29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life..... Luk 22:29 And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; Luk 22:30 That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel*.

The tribes are now included with the New Testament saints in God's house, *Eph 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; Eph 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; Eph 2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord*: In the New Testament they stick to that formula and appoint Apostles so that they have 12 Apostles, *Act 1:23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. Act 1:24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, Act 1:25 That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. Act 1:26 And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles*.

In James 1:1 the Christians are called "the twelve tribes", *Jas 1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting*. The epistle of James is either to all Christians or it is only relevant to Jews, which is it? Dr Kretzmann comments,

> v. **1**. **James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.** Unlike the salutations which characterise the opening of Paul's letters, this address is very brief, exactly in the style which was employed in those days in writing letters. The Apostle James calls himself a servant, which includes the ideas of both worshiper and minister. Of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ he is a servant, the two persons of the Godhead being altogether on the same level in divinity and authority. To the twelve tribes this letter is addressed, the expression being a synonym, not only for the entire Jewish race, but also for the true Israel, the spiritual people of the Old Testament, the sum total of those that had expected

the Messiah in firm faith and had now acknowledged Christ as the promised Messiah. These believers, these Christian Jews, were scattered abroad, were living in the Dispersion, in the countries outside of Palestine, and especially outside of Judea. In many cases they formed the majority of the congregation, and the entire policy of the congregation was guided by them. To all of these James sends his greeting in the customary form of salutation.

David Guzik comments,

> **To the twelve tribes**: What James meant by this reference to **the twelve tribes** is difficult to understand. The question is whether James wrote a letter to only Christians from a Jewish background or to all Christians. Certainly this letter applies to all Christians; yet James probably wrote his letter before Gentiles were brought into the church, or at least before Gentile Christians appeared in any significant number.
>
> **The twelve tribes** is a Jewish figure of speech that sometimes referred to the Jewish people as a whole, *Mat 19:28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* Paul referred to *our twelve tribes* in his speech before King Agrippa, *Act 26:7 Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jew*s. The concept of the "twelve tribes" among the Jewish people was still strong, even though they had not lived in their tribal allotments for centuries.
>
> In *Gal 2:8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) Gal 2:9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.* Paul described some of the first-century apostles as *the apostleship to the circumcised*; that is to say they had their ministry mainly to the *lost sheep of Israel*, even as Jesus mentioned in Mat 10:6; Mat 15:24. In the same context Paul mentioned this same **James**, so it is fair to also regard him as one having *the apostleship to the circumcised*.

Since Jew and Greek do not exist in the spirit, *Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. Gal 3:29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*, I suggest that the 12 Tribes are "All Christians", *Heb 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the **house of Israel after those days**, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and*

write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: Heb 8:11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. In the days "after", after the Old Testament, God would write the law into the hearts and minds of the "house of Israel". The 12 tribes become all Israel and include the Gentiles.

So I think that the "12 tribes" of the older testament transition into the "12 Apostles" of the New Testament. That is why that "window" into what the Apostles are doing in getting a replacement apostle, is given in Acts. It is important that we see that this service to God is still being upheld and so this simple procedure is given prominence.

The Law of Moses was instituted around the "12 tribes" but the Gospel, the Law of Christ is instituted around the "12 Apostles", the heavenly "12 tribes". The Assembly of God's people, no longer a nation upon earth but in heaven, must have new structures, *Gal 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. Gal 3:25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. Gal 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*. The Assembly of God's people was built on the foundation of the New Testament apostles, *Eph 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; Eph 2:20 And are* ***built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone****; Eph 2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an* ***holy temple in the Lord****: Eph 2:22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit*.

In the Old Testament the "12 tribes" worshipped in an earthly Temple, but in the New Testament, we see the people themselves are built into a holy Temple in the Lord, a heavenly temple, *1Pe 2:4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, 1Pe 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*. They are built up, they gain substance, and they offer **spiritual sacrifices**.

This is revealed in *Rev 21:10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Rev 21:11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; Rev 21:12 And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are* ***the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel****: Rev 21:13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. Rev 21:14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them* ***the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb****.*

One more thing to consider. After the generation that received the promises of Christ, the Jew ceases to have any significance in matters of the Christian faith. All men are treated the same, no Jew and no Gentile, they are all the same as regards redemption. Jews cease to exist in God's eyes, and so do Gentiles. We are one in Christ, and to maintain that earthly distinction of a Jew or Gentile, is to go against the Lord of Heaven.

92. The Declining Fabric of Earthly Religion

Preparatory reading: Isaiah Chapter 1.

The Tabernacle in the wilderness was made from a plan conceived in heaven, *Exo 25:40 Be sure to make them according to the plans you were shown on the mountain*. GW. This other worldly building was made according to its "plan", just as it had been given, a perfect image of something which could not be seen by human eye, but only with the spiritual eye. A man so equipped could manufacture, without any documentation, the heavenly plans. That man's name was Bezaleel, of the tribe of Christ, so in a manner of speaking, Christ made the Tabernacle, for this man Bezaleel was filled with the Spirit of Christ, *Exo 35:30 Moses said to the people of Israel: The LORD has chosen* ***Bezalel of the Judah tribe.*** *Exo 35:31 Not only has* ***the LORD filled him with his Spirit****, but he has given him wisdom and made him a skilled craftsman who can create objects of art with gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood*. CEV.

Bezaleel was filled with God's Spirit, and by this Spirit was given the wisdom and craftsmanship to craft the Tabernacle. The resources which were very valuable were supplied from the Israelites, and Moses and Aaron oversaw the elaborate rituals. With this investment in the Tabernacle, one might have supposed that it would have lasted for ever, but it did not, and God cast it aside, *Psa 78:56 Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies: Psa 78:57 But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow. Psa 78:58 For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. Psa 78:59* ***When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel: Psa 78:60 So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men;*** *Psa 78:61 And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand. Psa 78:62 He gave his people over also unto the sword; and was wroth with his inheritance*.

The Ark disappears from **Shiloh**, when young Samuel began his service to God, and then suddenly, the Tabernacle had its magnificent heart cut out, the Ark of the Covenant, which was dragged off as a "lucky charm" by Israel to defeat the Philistines, and in the battle with the Philistines it proved to be ineffective, for Israel was about to suffer Gods wrath for its waywardness, *1Sa 3:18 And Samuel*

told him all the words, and kept nothing back from him. And he said, It is Jehovah: let him do what is good in his sight. 1Sa 3:19 And Samuel grew, and Jehovah was with him, and let none of his words fall to the ground. 1Sa 3:20 And all Israel, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, knew that Samuel was established a prophet of Jehovah. 1Sa 3:21 And Jehovah appeared again at Shiloh; for Jehovah revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of Jehovah. **Shiloh** is in the middle of the territory of the **Ephraimites**, 20 miles north of Jerusalem.

After the Ark is taken captive, the service to God moves to the high places of Israel and worship is conducted in the high places instead, without the Ark of the Covenant, and although they continued to do sacrifice, it is not clear what value it is, *1Sa 9:11 And as they went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water, and said unto them, Is the seer here? 1Sa 9:12 And they answered them, and said, He is; behold, he is before you: make haste now, for he came to day to the city;* ***for there is a sacrifice of the people today in the high place.*** **Nob** was the centre of Israel's worship, although sacrifice was made on high places, *1Sa 21:1 Then came* ***David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest****: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why art thou alone, and no man with thee*? **Nob is just to the north of Jerusalem**, but bear in mind Jerusalem at this stage was under the control of the Jebusites.

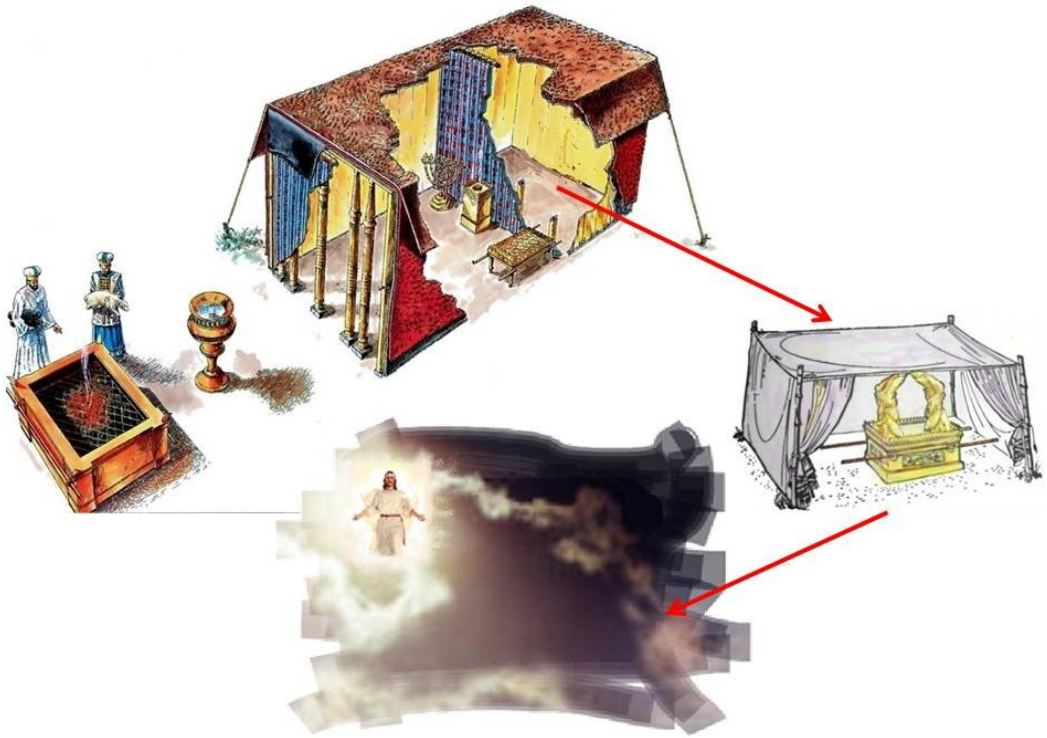
It is here that David receives the showbread from the priests, *1Sa 21:2 And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place. 1Sa 21:3 Now therefore what is under thine hand? give me five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present. 1Sa 21:4 And the priest answered David, and said, There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women. 1Sa 21:5 And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women have been kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel. 1Sa 21:6 So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away*.

Incidentally, Jesus uses David's action to state His position on the Sabbath, *Mat 12:4 How he (David) entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? Mat 12:5 Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless.* If the showbread was still put in order before the Lord, I suggest that it was done

in the Tabernacle, although no mention of that structure is made for the reason cited, *Psa 78:59* ***When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel: Psa 78:60 So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men***.

The people it seems had no central place to offer sacrifices until Solomon's Temple was built, *1Ki 3:1 And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the LORD, and the wall of Jerusalem round about. 1Ki 3:2* ***Only the people sacrificed in high places, because there was no house built unto the name of the LORD****, until those days.*

Whether God had deserted the whole nation and just left His faithful remnant to guard what was left of the Tabernacle and furniture we do not know. Later we find the Tabernacle in **Gibeon**. *1Ch 16:37So he left there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD Asaph and his brethren,* ***to minister before the ark*** *continually, as every day's work required: 1Ch 16:38And Obededom with their brethren, threescore and eight; Obededom also the son of Jeduthun and Hosah to be porters: 1Ch 16:39And Zadok the priest, and his brethren the priests, before* ***the tabernacle of the LORD*** *in the high place that was at* ***Gibeon****. 1Ch 16:40****To offer burnt offerings unto the LORD upon the altar of the burnt offering continually morning and evening****, and* ***to do according to all that is written in the law of the LORD****, which he commanded Israel.* We also see a clear split in the service and worship, between ministering before the Ark and sacrificial worship.



The Tabernacle of Moses (or something resembling it after all its journeys) was at **Gibeon** where the sacrificial laws were upheld. Of course they could not hold the Day of Atonement without the Ark of the Covenant, so the sins of the Nation were accumulating. **Gibeon** is in sight of the place where the Temple was to be built, almost waiting for the opportunity to go there and build. You may recall from the time of Joshua, the inhabitants made peace with Israel by means of a deception, *Jos 9:4 They did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up; Jos 9:5 And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy. Jos 9:6 And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us.*

There is a separation between the sacrificial service of the law to men and the service to God. The ceremonial laws become separated from the Ark of the Covenant (and the Mercy Seat). The Tabernacle of Moses no longer has a Holy of Holies in which God was met with, as the Holy of Holies is now in David's Tabernacle. The Ark of the Covenant has moved home, the covenant in a manner of speaking has shifted from the Law to the Gospel.

It was on **Gibeon** that Solomon made the last great sacrifice before he went to the Temple, *2Ch 1:3 So Solomon, and all the congregation with him,* ***went to the high place that was at Gibeon; for there was the tabernacle of the congregation of God****, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness. 2Ch 1:4 But the ark of God had David brought up from Kirjathjearim to the place which David had prepared for it: for he had pitched a tent for it at Jerusalem. 2Ch 1:5 Moreover the brasen altar, that Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made, he put before the tabernacle of the LORD: and Solomon and the congregation sought unto it. 2Ch 1:6 And Solomon went up thither to the brasen altar before the LORD, which was at the tabernacle of the congregation, and offered a thousand burnt offerings upon it*.

The Tabernacle appears again at the inauguration of the Temple to be assimilated into the structure, *2Ch 5:4 And all the elders of Israel came; and the Levites took up the ark. 2Ch 5:5* ***And they brought up the ark, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle, these did the priests and the Levites bring up.*** *2Ch 5:6 Also king Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel that were assembled unto him before the ark, sacrificed sheep and oxen, which could not be told nor numbered*

*for multitude. 2Ch 5:7 And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD unto his place, to the oracle of the house, into the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims: 2Ch 5:8 For the cherubims spread forth their wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark and the staves thereof above. 2Ch 5:9 And they drew out the staves of the ark, that the ends of the staves were seen from the ark before the oracle; but they were not seen without**. And there it is unto this day***.

The Tabernacle was rescued from its former licensees to be brought into God's habitation. But I think that there is more to this history and it has a spiritual counterpart, though you may disagree with me. The things that happen on earth seem to have an origin in the other heavenly world, *Eph 2:2 You followed the ways of this world and obeyed the devil. He rules the world, and his spirit has power over everyone who doesn't obey God*. CEV.....*Dan 10:13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. Dan 10:14 Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days*. The two worlds do indeed seem to work in parallel and we should look for parallels.

The Ark of the Covenant in separating itself from the tent of the meeting or Tabernacle, prefigures the death of Jesus. We read of our bodies being like a tent, a temporary dwelling, *2Co 5:1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*. Jesus body was also described as a tent or tabernacle, *Joh 1:14 And **the Word became flesh, and did tabernacle among us**, and we beheld his glory, glory as of an only begotten of a father, full of grace and truth*. LITV.

Jesus became human, with all the power of God, *Col 2:9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*. God was in Christ, *2Co 5:19 What we mean is that God was in Christ, offering peace and forgiveness to the people of this world. And he has given us the work of sharing his message about peace.* CEV. When Jesus died, He left His earthly tabernacle for heaven. What departed was the Spirit of Jesus, the Ark of the covenant, the Mercyseat, *Rom 3:24 being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; Rom 3:25 whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood, for the shewing forth of his righteousness, in respect of the passing by the sins that had taken place before, through the forbearance of God*; Darby.

The position of the Ark is now in heaven and in the Temple, *Rev 11:19 And **the temple of God was opened in heaven**, and **there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament**: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail*. Just as the Ark went into the Temple of Solomon, so Christ, the true Ark of God, entered His heavenly Temple. The Tabernacle or tent, goes into the Temple also.

But let us not forget why the Tabernacle and the Ark parted company. It was because of the sins of the people, *Psa 78:59 When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel: Psa 78:60 So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men**;** Psa 78:61 And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand. Psa 78:62 He gave his people over also unto the sword; and was wroth with his inheritance*. Christ's death was in part by the delivery of evil people to His death and caused Him to depart for heaven.

The warning of impending doom also was issued to Solomon's Temple, J*er 7:8 Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Jer 7:9 Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; Jer 7:10 And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Jer 7:11 Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD. Jer 7:12 But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. Jer 7:13 And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; Jer 7:14* ***Therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh***.

As Jesus said, *Joh 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*. The earthly gives way to the heavenly, *Rev 11:19 And* ***the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament****: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail*.

93. Babylon Falling.

Preparatory reading: Genesis Chapter 11

Can you trust anyone? Well these days, the days of the scammers, crooked politicians, where greed is good and the poor man is mugged, you are certainly wise to trust nobody. It's a lesson you have learned and you are on guard to avoid the pitfalls of life. But what if the enemy is a little closer to home, if it was perhaps you for instance, don't you find that disconcerting? What do I mean? You thought that you were capable of making rational decisions, which clearly you are not, at least not all of the time, because to err is human and the Bible says, *Psa 146:3 Put not your trust in princes,* ***nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help****. Psa 146:4 His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. Psa 146:5 Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God*.

That says that the high and mighty and the seed of man cannot be trusted when all is said and done, *Joh 2:23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. Joh 2:24 But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, Joh 2:25 And needed not that any should testify of man:* ***for he knew (γινώσκω) what was in man***. Jesus did not trust any man to testify of Him, because He **knew** what man was like, and John loves to use ***γινώσκω*** to describe this deeper, person-to-person knowledge that characterizes God. Jesus chose ***γινώσκω*** to describe the intimacy between the Father and the Son, as well as the connection between Himself and His sheep. It was this knowledge which Jesus had which led Him to distrust men.

If Jesus saw this in us, that we cannot be trusted to hold His testimony, then we had better take note, and think what it means for our lives. We cannot trust ourselves to make good decisions and this is truer than ever when we are led by our desires. You have a little voice in you, which says that some of your appalling judgements are all right, and that God wouldn't possibly mislead you, and although you are going against the Scripture, it doesn't matter for this is all God's will. Nonsense! This is not just folly it is madness, *Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?* And before you say, "my conscience would not let me down", think again because your conscience can be evil, *Heb 10:22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an* ***evil conscience****, and our bodies washed with pure water*.

The fact that we cannot trust our own judgement should put us on guard against trusting another man's judgement. Yet we do just that, we trust ourselves to other people we have not met before, to guide us in matters of religion. We go to so called "churches", thinking that because they have been around for years, they must be right, and their leaders are honest, experts in religion, and we do so, not even seeking any proof of who these people are. What kind of person buys a car without doing some research into what he is buying, checking its reliability, getting a specification, getting a condition report, especially if it is second hand. I will tell you who does not do this, it's the very person who accepts what they see, at face value and thinks that they are capable of making that discernment for themselves, without acknowledging that in this life they are fallible. The very people of whom we are speaking.

Scripture is our sure guide, under the influence of the spirit of Jesus, *Joh 14:26 and the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name,* ***he will teach you all things, and remind you of all things that I said to you***. The fall of Adam was occasioned by a choice, the choice of obtaining his knowledge directly from God or by-passing God and taking it directly, although if he went around God to obtain knowledge, it could be both good knowledge and evil knowledge and it would not be self evident what was good. You may become very religious, like the Jews, but you would not have the knowledge of

God, *Rom 10:2 For I bear them record that* ***they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge****. Rom 10:3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. Rom 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*.

This leads on to the interesting subject of epistemology, the study of knowledge. Epistemology addresses the fundamental questions of, "What is knowledge?", "How is knowledge acquired?", "What do people know?", "How do we know what we know?", "Why do we know what we know?" If we, the human machine that processes data, have an imperfect processor, then the world that we think we think that we "know" and see, is very different than the world that God intended that we should see. Our world view, is in consequence, different from the Christian world view, the view that Christ intended for us to have.

There is a blindness to the things of God, as Jesus said, *Joh 9:39 And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and* ***that they which see might be made blind***. Those who stand outside of Jesus are doomed to ignorance and blindness, *Eph 4:17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Eph 4:18 Having* ***the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart****: Eph 4:19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness*.

This sin induced blindness has consequences, as R J Rushdoony points out,

> Those who raise the question, "What would have happened if, after Eve submitted to the tempter, Adam had refused (to submit to the tempter)? What would God have done?" are indignant when I object to their supposedly harmless theological exercise. But what they have done is to insist on the ultimacy of chance and its priority to and superiority over God. Chance events can impede, alter, or destroy God's purpose, and sovereignty is clearly conveyed to the great god, chance. Some theologians, who claim to believe in systematic theology, still affirm the idea of possibility outside of God. Clearly, all non-Reformed theologies, and humanists, affirm such a doctrine of possibility. Why? Is it not in fact a fearful destiny for man to be taken out of God's sovereignty and providence and placed under chance?
>
> However "hard" a doctrine predestination may be, it still places us under God's total government and in a universe of total meaning. The affirmation of any possibility apart from the decree of God, on the other hand, places us in a meaningless universe, and in the context of senseless events. Why do men choose such a faith and defend it passionately? The answer is that, whatever the cost, this view of "possibility" gives man autonomy over God. In a graveyard, the living

man is king over all, and man the sinner prefers a graveyard without God, to the Garden of Eden with God. Chance reduces his universe to senselessness, but man becomes god over this chaos.

James Daane, in “A Theology of Grace” (1954), holds that it was finally and ultimately in Adam’s power not to sin. Only so, he holds, can we hold to any genuinely Christian faith which preserves man from sheer determinism. Such a position clearly contradicts Scripture, such as *Eph 1:4* ***According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world****, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Eph 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will*, and denies that, before the foundation of the world, we were predestined unto salvation. It would reduce God to playing a situation-ethics type of game, reacting to man rather than creating and governing man. Moreover, to speak then of free will is wrong on several accounts.

Among other reasons, first, men like Daane insist on viewing man’s freedom in an absolute sense. But man is a creature, and his freedom is a creaturely and limited freedom. Man does not choose his own nature, time and place of birth, sex, aptitudes, or anything else in this direction. Because he is a creature, not God, and not the first cause, man’s freedom is a limited, derivative, and secondary freedom. Man’s freedom is the freedom to be the man God created him to be, not the freedom to be a god. Moreover, his creaturely freedom differs in terms of his estate, i.e., the states of innocence, the fall, grace, and glory each gives man a differing form of creaturely freedom.

The retention of the knowledge of God is paramount to man’s sanity, *Rom 1:28 And even as* ***they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind****, to do those things which are not convenient; Rom 1:29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers*. As man did not like to retain the knowledge of God, as man determined he was above a creature, and next he determined he was above his Creator, he moved that he should make a name for himself not God, at Babylon, *Gen 11:4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us* ***make us a name, lest we be scattered*** *abroad upon the face of the whole earth*.

This was the cause of man’s demise at Babylon, like as in Eden, man wanted to be as God. Instead of serving God, and getting a “name” made by God, he thought that he would do it on his own. But God will give men a name and a place, if man will obey Him, *Isa 56:4 For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Isa 56:5 Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my*

walls ***a place and a name*** *better than of sons and of daughters:* ***I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off****. Isa 56:6 Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; Isa 56:7 Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people*.

Yet again, in his ignorance and vanity, man tries to overcome his Creator and live forever in a world of his own making. It was a vanity project, a brick built memorial to man's ambitions of being the fount of all knowledge. He built "a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heavens", with the technology at hand in those days and he still builds today, with the technology of space rockets, still trying to reach into the heavens. "The rocket will free man from his remaining chains, the chains of gravity which still tie him to this planet. It will open to him the gates of heaven," so said the Nazi German scientist Wernher von Braun. So what? If as the evolutionists say, there is life out there, we don't have to go and pollute the universe with our seed.

It is pointless with the known technology thinking that we would survive the journey to another planet capable of supporting life, but this is today's vanity project, like President John F Kennedy said,

> We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win, and the others, too. It is for these reasons that I regard the decision last year to shift our efforts in space from low to high gear as among the most important decisions that will be made during my incumbency in the office of the presidency.

That doesn't give a really good reason for going into space, and it sounds like Peter Sellers political speech satire which said nothing. Do we really "choose to go", or was it some political reason, like the Russian dominance of space. And what of the "other things", what other things? And who issued the challenge, "that challenge is one that we are willing to accept"? Man has not changed in 4,000 years, and he still parades his vanity in the guise of knowledge.

Babylon was a metaphor for the true foundation and building, *Co 3:10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. 1Co 3:11* ***For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ***. It is not building a "*tower, whose top may*

reach unto heaven" made by man's hand, but we get to heaven by building upon Jesus alone, the sure foundation and none other.

Paul said in his sermon at Mars hill, *Act 17:26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed,* ***and the bounds of their habitation****; Act 17:27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:*

"God has set the boundaries for us to live in. We can attempt to live outside these boundaries but only temporarily and with little comfort. Why would God set boundaries for us? Not to challenge us to make a name for ourselves or to reach into heaven, but so we would seek Him and find Him. While some go to great measures to seek their own desires, God promises us that if we seek Him, we will find Him because He is not far from each one of us." *Hag 2:7 And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts. Hag 2:8 The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts. Hag 2:9 The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.*

Man is continually looking to escape the realities of this world. He takes drugs to escape reality, he makes up a fantasy world to replace this world, he thinks he can defeat time and ageing with cosmetics to avoid the truth of this world, he thinks that by going into space he can escape from his origins in sin on this world. But as the fictional character Douglas Quaid was asked at the Recall Corporation, in the film "Total Recall",

> "What is it that is exactly the same about every single vacation you have ever taken? Douglas Quaid: I give up. Bob McClane: You! You're the same. No matter where you go, there you are. It's always the same old you. Let me suggest that you take a vacation from yourself. I-I know it sounds wild. It is the latest thing in travel. We call it the Ego Trip."

I think that the natural man is on an ego trip to avoid any thoughts of God, to avoid that final confrontation, the inevitable confrontation with Christ. If we confront Jesus now, we can do something about our condition, if we leave it to the end, we shall be able to do nothing about it!

What is Babylon and how does it interact with Christians? Let us examine this next.

94. The Rise of Egypt and Babylon.

Preparatory reading: Genesis Chapter 10

Two nations appear as Israel's arch enemies in its history, and we shall look at the rise and development of these nations.

It never ceases to amaze me, and I have pointed it out many times in the past, that many of our translations of the Bible, mask the word being translated and lose the meaning and contexts in the process. If I were to ask you what country Mizraim was, you would probably not know it. A few versions put the word Mizraim as a translation of the country that I am talking about, for example, *Gen 12:10 And a scarcity of food came to be in the land, and Aḇram went down to* ***Mitsrayim*** *to dwell there, for the scarcity of food was severe in the land*. TS2009. By looking at the AV you will see the translation of Mitzraim is rendered as Egypt. This translation would not automatically make you link the word Egypt with one of the descendents of Ham, but you might if it had been rendered Mitzraim.

The descendent of Ham that I am speaking about is called Mizraim, and from him comes the Mizraimites, *Gen 10:6 And the sons of Ham; Cush, and* ***Mizraim****, and Phut, and Canaan*. Egypt was founded by Mizraim a descendent of one of Noah's sons, Ham. Thereafter, what we call Egypt, is in fact, in the Hebrew Bible, called מִצְרַיִם = mitsrayim, a plural, perhaps referring to Upper and Lower Egypt. The name 'Egypt' speculatively comes from the Greek Aegyptos which was the Greek pronunciation of the Ancient Egyptian name 'Hwt-Ka-Ptah' ("Mansion of the Spirit of Ptah"), originally the name of the city of Memphis.

Egypt's Arabic name is Miṣr in Classical Quranic Arabic and Maṣr in Egyptian Arabic. The name Miṣr comes from the ancient Semitic name for Egypt and is related to the Biblical Hebrew word Mizraim. Egypt has also been known by other names throughout history, including:

- Kemet. The ancient Egyptians called their country Kemet, which means "the black land". This name comes from the rich, fertile black soil that was left behind after the Nile flooded each year.
- Hikuptah. The Egyptians also called their country Hikuptah, which was the name of the city of Memphis. Memphis was known as the "home of the soul (or twin) of Ptah".
- Um al-Dunya. This Arabic expression translates to "Mother of the World" and has been used throughout history to refer to Egypt's achievements.

I shall use Mitzraim/Egypt to denote this first antagonist of Israel. The second antagonist is descended for the same patriarch, Ham, *Gen 10:6 And the sons of Ham;* ***Cush,*** *and Mizraim, and Phut, and Canaan. Gen 10:7 And the sons of Cush; Seba, and Havilah, and Sabtah, and Raamah, and Sabtecha: and the sons of Raamah; Sheba, and Dedan. Gen 10:8 And* ***Cush begat Nimrod****: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. Gen 10:9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD:*

wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD. Gen 10:10 And ***the beginning of his kingdom was Babel****, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. Gen 10:11Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah*. Babel בָּבֶל = bâbel was the city of Babylon, *Gen 11:9 Therefore it was called* ***Babylon****, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth, and from there the LORD scattered them over the surface of the entire earth.* ISV.

Why it calls the place Babel instead of Babylon in so many translations of the Bible in Genesis 10:10, I do not know, but in the Book of Kings, the translators revert to Babylon when it is just the same word which they first rendered Babel, *2Ki 17:24 And the king of Assyria brought men from* ***Babylon****, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof*.

We see two great civilisations that exist before the nation of Israel, and both these civilisations exist as types of the worst excesses of humanity, and certainly Babylon outshines them all in terms of what sinful man aspires to, *Rev 18:2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. Rev 18:3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. Rev 18:4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying,* ***Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues****.*

Babylon tempts man with her delicacies, in fact she is portrayed as a prostitute selling her wares, and this universal picture of carnality is given under the heading of Babylon the great, *Rev 18:11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: Rev 18:12 The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, Rev 18:13 And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. Rev 18:14 And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all*.

So whether it is Egypt or Babylon, indeed many other cities fulfil its role, its purpose is to make war on the children of God, and this has been going on since satan lied to Eve at the beginning. How do we fight back, *2Co 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 2Co 10:4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong*

holds;) 2Co 10:5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; 2Co 10:6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

I am sure that all believers agree with that sentiment, but I am not always certain that they comply with its practice, because they are found sitting in Babylon, enjoying her delicacies while at the same time decrying them. In fact there is little difference between the aspirations of many Christians and Babylonians, and we do not see the Christians making the stand that they are exhorted to, "***Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues***".

Let me give "a for instance", "what hobbies should a Christian have?" I've taken this as a starting point, from John Piper.

> But here is what I think I need to say biblically: Yes, some people waste their lives playing. They do. Their whole life is jumping from one fun thing to the next. That is why all they know to talk about, and all they spend their life thinking about, is the next toy or the next vacation — the next stunt that they are going to be a part of. And those people give little thought to the biblical truth that their life is not their own. Paul said, *1Co 6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 1Co 6:20* ***For ye are bought with a price****: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*. These people act as if they do whatever they please with no reference to the One who owns them or bought them. And those people need to hit pause on their life and ask, "Am I really born again? Do I have any of the affections my Father in heaven has?"
>
> So to me, if you operate from that verse in 1 Corinthians 6, then you ask of your hobbies — whether outdoors or indoors. It doesn't make any difference whether you collect coins or climb mountains — Is this the Lord's will for my life that he bought, and he owns? And to answer that you ask, Am I glorifying him in this hobby? Is this hobby serving to make him look glorious? Is it making me look like one who values his glory above all?
>
> Paul said, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do" — whether you climb mountains or hunt deer or collect coins or do crossword puzzles — "do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Make him look like the Treasure that he is in doing it**. If you can't, don't do it.**

That is a very nice sentiment, but I doubt whether many Christians examine everything that they do, in terms of "glorifying the Lord". In fact I do not see the people in the Bible taking upon themselves "hobbies", "an activity done

regularly in one's leisure time for pleasure”. I do not see Abraham idling away his spare moments after a day of grafting among his herds with a game of cards, or Moses sitting down to some trivial pursuit, or Jesus feeling the need for a bit time off from His ministry to recover and relax by doing an activity. He did though see the need for rest, *Mar 6:30 And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. Mar 6:31 And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat*. But His restoration was through prayer, *Mat 14:23 And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone*.

The thing is, why should I want to do something that will pass my time in some alternative occupation, I might say, some alternative universe, where I do not consider my faith, which is just an excuse to do something other than be in my faith, which directs my thoughts away from God because I am concentrating upon another activity and to say this activity is essential to my spiritual well being? I think that in most cases we are lying to ourselves and deceiving ourselves into thinking that we are serving God by our hobbies.

I was very conflicted when I first made my profession of faith because I could see that a lot of activities that I did seemed out of place or even contradictory to my new found faith. Before, I played volley ball on Sundays, did SCUBA diving, was reasonably accomplished at painting in oils, did photography, went down the public house, drank a lot, spent idle moments with friends and had parties. This didn’t seem to sit right with me, although I could not give verses to back up my feelings. The best way to deal with this, I thought, was to give all these things up, and by so doing I would become a better person.

I never went for a drink with colleagues, and never went to a “pub” for at least 5 years. I never went to a works Christmas party, which incidentally lasted all night and was still going on in the morning, and felt that this social isolation was probably the best way of dealing with the unbeliever. I gave up all my hobbies to the Lord, rather that justify them as being “to the Lord”, and I have hardly picked up a paintbrush since. But to be honest, it was my fear of not being able to confront the world on the real issue of Christianity, to make war on sin in my life and outside of my life.

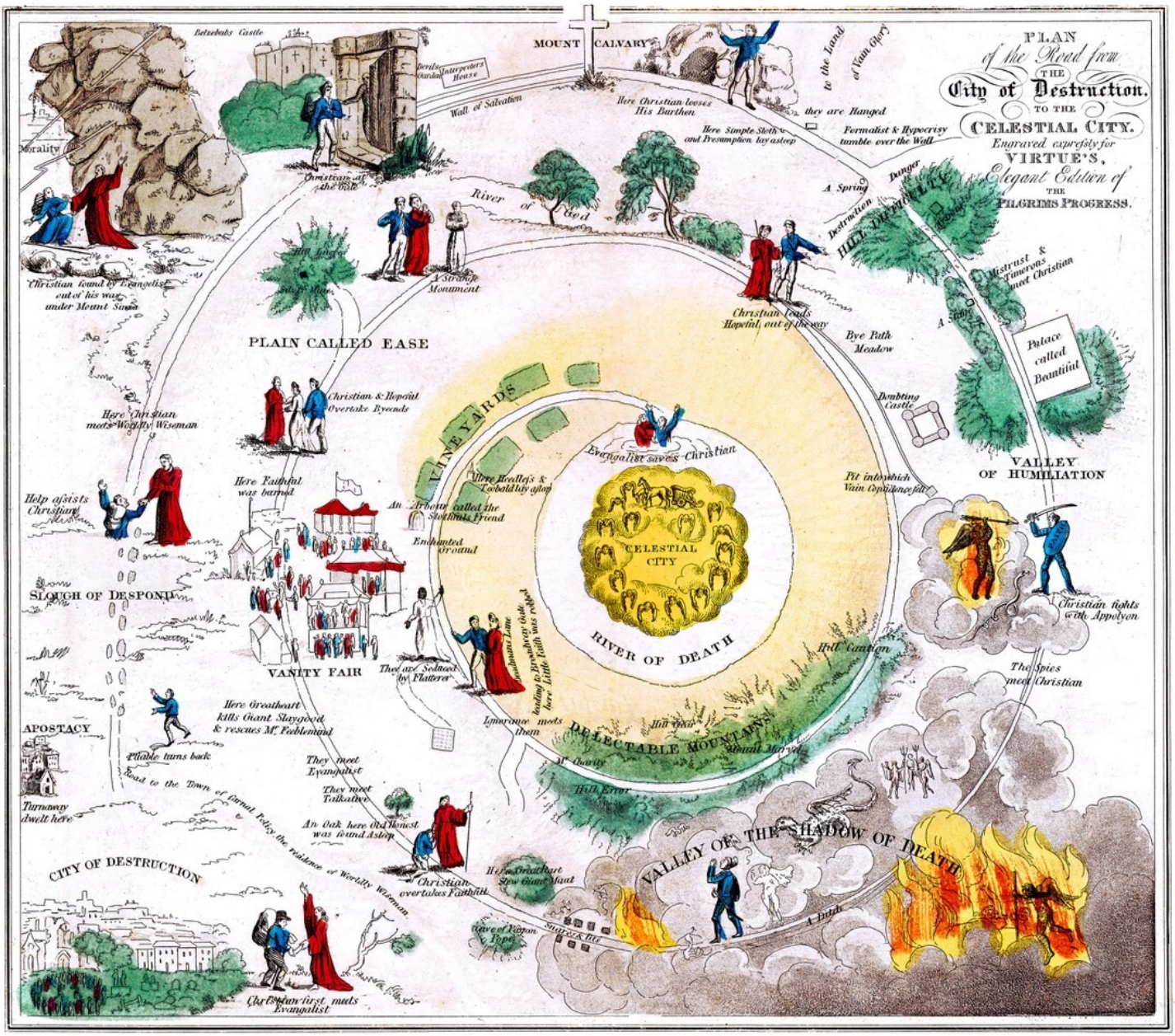
As time went on, I slipped back into certain pastimes, tennis, windsurfing, and other things, in which I had control over who I did them with, but this time, I had not even considered them in terms of service to the Lord. I was an established Christian and they just slipped into my comfortable life, along with many other things that seemed alright, because in the main they were done in a Christian environment, with Christians and so were normal to me. I did my ministries, my devotions and prayers in one compartment of my life, and I did the world, not so much sinful, in the other compartment of my life. Still I was not self examining

myself by the standard of Scripture and I remained in my then, comfortable faith. I would justify what I did to myself but not, if I was truthful, to the Lord.

My journey was like a “Pilgrims Progress”, and I am not attempting to be boastful by this comparison, but my journey is still not over. We have all come from this worldly system, but how far we have come varies, and so I am not prescribing my way, that Jesus leads me, because we have so many different trials to go through, shaping us, moulding our minds and making us into just the servants He wants. Of course we must comply with the basic requirements of a blood bought child of God, but the road that we take differs from each other, going to the same end. But we must question the things that we do, and whether we are glorifying the Lord.

So we are saved and brought out of Mizraim/Egypt and then we go on a journey and on that journey will have different trials and triumphs. Just how we handle them will show what we are made of and give an indication of the strength of our faith. We fight our way through Egypt and Babylon, and on one level, the human level, the Bible is a story of that fight. We do not often see that there is nothing new under the sun and the old saints have trodden the same path that we tread, *Jas 5:10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Jas 5:11 Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy*.

How did they fight the same evils that we fight, and how did they overcome them? We shall look at some of the lives of the saints next.



95. Fighting Egypt and Babylon.

Preparatory reading: Genesis Chapter 37

I want to show aspects of Egypt and Babylon, how they work in our lives, and to do this I shall be considering two great men of scripture, Joseph and Daniel. These men's lives are lived out at the peak of two huge Empires and we shall examine how their lives interacted with the Empires and moulded them into men of God.

There is of course, overriding all the things that happen in their lives, the Providence of God, such that Joseph could say to his brothers, *Gen 50:20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive*. I do not think that Joseph knew this outcome at the beginning but it was so obvious to him at the end that he had established a precedent for all believers, *Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

Somehow, the sins that we commit voluntarily and involuntarily, the things that we do and say, the evil and the good, our whole life, is brought together under God's Sovereign plan and guidance to bring about "*good to them that love God"*. God is always in control, although it seems like we are in control, *Eph 1:9 And He has made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure,* ***which He purposed in Christ*** *Eph 1:10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to bring all things in heaven and on earth together in Christ. Eph 1:11* ***In Him we were also chosen as God's own, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything by the counsel of His will****, Eph 1:12 in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, would be for the praise of His glory*. BSB.

Of course it is foolish to say Gods overarching Will, the Will with which He rules the world, makes every thing which you do right, simply because you cannot resist doing His Will. What, are you saying that you are not responsible for the sin which you commit, *Rom 9:19 Someone may ask, "****How can God blame us****, if he makes us behave in the way he want us to?"* CEV. Paul counters this argument with, *Rom 9:20 But, my friend, I ask, "Who do you think you are to question God? Does the clay have the right to ask the potter why he shaped it the way he did? Rom 9:21 Doesn't a potter have the right to make a fancy bowl and a plain bowl out of the same lump of clay?" Rom 9:22 God wanted to show his anger and reveal his power against everyone who deserved to be destroyed. But instead, he patiently put up with them. Rom 9:23 He did this by showing how glorious he is when he has pity on the people he has chosen to share in his glory*. CEV. We are guilty for our own sin.

Then there is the devil and his hordes manipulating this world. From the encounter with Job, we see that there are limits upon satan's actions against the believer, imposed by the Almighty, but we don't know of any limitations placed upon the unbeliever whom satan captivates at will. There are the Nations each having their earthly agenda but with the battles of the spiritual rulers who are overshadowing this present reality, the things happening now in the physical realm being the consequence of other reasoning in the spiritual realm. But all is happening under the Sovereignty of God. Truly we live in a vastly more complex domain than we can think of*, 2Th 2:7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way*.

Into this maelstrom of earthly life was born Joseph, son of Jacob and his woman Rachel. Jacob was 90 years old and his father, Isaac, his grandfather was 150 years of age at the time. The back story to his birth is that Jacob had been cheated by his uncle Laban, just as Jacob had cheated Esau, so what goes around comes around. Jacob was tricked into working longer for his beloved Rachel, but after he completes 14 years, enough was enough, and he wanted to break free of Laban, his uncle, *Gen 30:25 And it came to pass, when Rachel had born Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country. Gen 30:26 Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service which I have done thee.*

His father in law does not want to let Jacob leave and he serves for another 6 years, but in the providence of God, makes a huge herd of cattle for himself, *Gen 31:41 Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times. Gen 31:42 Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight*.

An incident occurs as they are leaving, where Rachel steals her father “house gods”, *Gen 31:34 She had already hidden them in the cushion she used as a saddle and was sitting on it. Laban searched everywhere and did not find them. Gen 31:35 Rachel said, "Father, please don't be angry with me for not getting up; I am having my period." Laban kept on searching, but still did not find the idols.* CEV. Rachel was not the “squeaky clean” mother we might have hoped for Joseph. Years under the pagan the cult of “Sin”, a moon god worshiped in Haran, had contaminated her life and compromised her belief, and this in turn would have influenced Joseph in his formative years. Even so, Jacob loved her and guarded her above his other wives and concubines, *Gen 33:2 And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost*.

Rachel dies at Bethlehem, in childbirth, leaving Joseph and Benjamin his baby brother orphans, *Gen 35:16 And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour. Gen 35:17 And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also. Gen 35:18 And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin. Gen 35:19 And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. Gen 35:20 And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day*. According to the Quran, Joseph was 6–7 years old when Benjamin was born in Canaan, but the Bible has no record of his age when Benjamin was born.

Jacob loved Joseph more than the other sons, *Gen 37:2 and this is the story of his family. When Jacob's son Joseph was seventeen years old, he took care of the sheep with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah. But he was always telling his father all sorts of bad things about his brothers. Gen 37:3 Jacob loved Joseph more than he did any of his other sons, because Joseph was born after Jacob was very old. Jacob had given Joseph a fancy coat Gen 37:4 to show that he was his favorite son, and so Joseph's brothers hated him and would not be friendly to him*. CEV.

There were a number of character flaws developing in this young man Joseph, and much of it was allowed to develop by his doting father, who brings misery upon himself for not ruling his family with unbiased impartiality. For a start, he signalled to his other sons in a most public manner, that Joseph was special, by giving him a coat of colours. Everywhere the boy went he displayed, by this ostentatious gift, that he was the favourite and this made the brothers angry towards him. Joseph was too selfish, or too short-sighted to see that his manner had caused a family rift.

This short-sightedness in us is one of the many products of immaturity and in some Christians it lingers long and if it is not treated it grows into a hardened old age, and an incapability to change. It does not consider the feeling of anyone but self, and at this stage Joseph was full of self. He is the “number one son” and that is all that counts, whatever his brothers feel is of no matter to him, he is the centre of his universe. He certainly lacked that servant mentality that he would show when he became Zaphnathpaaneah, the saviour of the world. Egypt will be his Nemesis but also his redemption.

The contempt towards Joseph shown by his brothers was the natural outcome of his attitude, and Joseph would very likely have become an entitled bully if his brothers had not intervened. Joseph also became a talebearer, *Gen 37:2 ..... and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report*. This is not an endearing quality among brethren, to have one of your number constantly telling of your faults to the father, who well knew them but did nothing about them. And why did not Jacob do something about his sons “title tattle”, seeing the disruption it was causing? Why did he not rebuke Joseph and tell him to look at his own life and sins, *Psa 130:3 If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? Psa 130:4 But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared*.

Did Joseph have the slightest knowledge of forgiveness of sins at this stage of his life? He has become the insufferable hypocrite and his father is in dereliction of paternal duties, perhaps making allowance for Joseph having lost his mother at so young an age, poor dear! The power of satan has gripped the family despite God blessing them above all families, and this seems to stay throughout Jacob’s sad life, *Gen 47:8 and the king asked him, "How old are you?" Gen 47:9 Jacob answered, "My life of wandering has lasted a hundred and thirty years. Those*

years have been few and difficult, unlike the long years of my ancestors in their wanderings." GNB.

Just when you might think that things could get no worse, they do get worse, when Joseph has some dreams, *Gen 37:5 One day, Joseph told his brothers what he had dreamed, and they hated him even more. Gen 37:6 Joseph said, "Let me tell you about my dream. Gen 37:7 We were out in the field, tying up bundles of wheat. Suddenly my bundle stood up, and your bundles gathered around and bowed down to it." Gen 37:8 His brothers asked, "Do you really think you are going to be king and rule over us?" Now they hated Joseph more than ever because of what he had said about his dream. Gen 37:9 Joseph later had another dream, and he told his brothers, "Listen to what else I dreamed. The sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowed down to me." Gen 37:10 When he told his father about this dream, his father became angry and said, "What's that supposed to mean? Are your mother and I and your brothers all going to come and bow down in front of you?" Gen 37:11 Joseph's brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept wondering about the dream*. CEV.

Modesty and self-effacement are not in Joseph's character yet, and it will take a spell in the isolation of an Egyptian prison to contemplate his ways. He cannot tell the story he has seen in the dreams without his usual insensitive manner. *"Let me tell you about my dream"* he blurts out, not "would anyone like to hear this strange dream I have had". *"Listen to what else I dreamed"* he says of the second dream, and whether they liked to or not, he is going to tell them, but the wider interpretation of the dream is not given, only the immediate one, of the family being in subjection to him, Joseph the centre of the universe.

But do remember, as goes the earthly, so goes the heavenly. What Joseph acts out in the flesh is fulfilled in heaven.

It could have been so different if the brashness of his youth had been sloughed off with the modesty of age. It is as if life were a competition that Joseph always had to win on his terms and that he would step on anyone who got in his way, instead of helping people to understand, instead of serving and instead of giving Almighty God the Praise due, as the one from whom all knowledge and blessings flow. This is an evil that I have seen among Christians today, in their immaturity, they seek not to edify the souls of their fellow travellers, but the take opportunity to bring them down. In Africa, they had a phrase to describe this action, they called it a PHD, "pull him down", and it referred to an action that was not helpful but downright malicious. Well Joseph's awarded quite a few PHD's to his brothers and now it's time for the brothers to issue Joseph with one.

To be fair to Joseph, he wasn't exactly surrounded by Godly examples, and the infighting and violence of his brothers must have seemed natural to him. A big thing he was lacking in his life was the Scriptures, which were all told about 30 pages long at that date, and we cannot judge him by the fuller knowledge we possess, because he is a child of his age. We see sin at work and the devils

fingerprints are all over it, and this family are coming to terms with their relationship to God and what pleases the Almighty.

The opportunity to be rid of one problem came with the creating of other problems, *Gen 37:12 And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. Gen 37:13 And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I.* We often do not see that we cause other people problems by our sins and deceits, so it must have come as a surprise to Joseph to have been thrown in a pit, *Gen 37:19 And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. Gen 37:20 Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams*.

Reuben was the eldest son and perhaps more forgiving, whereas the other brothers would have killed him, *Gen 37:21 And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him. Gen 37:22 And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him;* ***that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.*** *Gen 37:23 And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him; Gen 37:24 And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it*.

Reuben mysteriously is taken away from the situation and Judah steps in with another plan, to make the problem go away without the necessity of murder, *Gen 37:25 And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. Gen 37:26 And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Gen 37:27 Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content. Gen 37:28 Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.*

Reuben is beside himself at discovering the pit empty and his brother gone, *Gen 37:29 And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes. Gen 37:30 And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go? Gen 37:31 And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; Gen 37:32 And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no. Gen 37:33 And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. Gen 37:34 And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. Gen 37:35 And all*

his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him. Gen 37:36 And the Midianites sold him into Mizraim unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard.

Mizraim/Egypt seems to be this worlds system, the world that seeks to bring God's people into bondage to its forms or to release them in service. It is the fabric of human life on earth at any given time and this fabric can involve good, bad and neutral forms and we are about to see the effect upon Joseph. It will either bring the best out in him or it will show the worst. Mizraim is rising on Joseph's horizon.

96. Josephs New Birth.

Preparatory reading: Romans Chapter 5

It is quite difficult to say when a person is "converted" in the Old Testament, but they were according to David, *Psa 51:12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Psa 51:13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and* ***sinners shall be converted unto thee***. Just when this occurred in an individual is not clear, and in Joseph's case it is never stated and he is not recorded as having a crisis of conscience as described by Paul in the New Testament, *Rom 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

From the beginning, people are just assumed to be for the Lord or against the Lord. But what happened in their lives to make them "for the Lord" is not said. There is no written law for centuries, no agreed text on what is right and what is wrong, to give the people guidance in the way of the Lord. There is no written law in Joseph's day to convict him of sin, and from Paul in the New Testament, we see that the law is necessary to convict one of sin, *Rom 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. Rom 7:8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence.* ***For without the law sin was dead***.

So if there was no law, **NO Mosaic Law**, in Joseph's time, how was sin brought to light and dealt with, *Rom 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: Rom 5:13* ***(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.*** *Rom 5:14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come*. Sin was not put to your account without the force of the law. I'll let Jeremy Myers explain

Sin is not imputed. First, part of the problem in Romans 5:13 is the poor decision by some Bible translators to use the word "imputed." The word Paul uses (ἐλλογέω = *ellogeo*) is not the same word for "imputed" in other contexts (*logizomai*; *Rom 4:11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be* ***imputed*** *(λογίζομαι) unto them also.*

The only other place in the New Testament that *ellogeo = ἐλλογέω* is used is Philemon, *Phm 1:18 If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account (ἐλλογέω);* where Paul instructs Philemon to "charge" to Paul's account anything that Philemon might owe. In using *ellogeo* in Romans 5:13, Paul is saying that where there is no law, people cannot be charged with breaking it or having it put to their account.

A modern example might help. Have you ever heard of anyone being charged with the crime of owning more than 10 books? Of course not, because that law doesn't exist! People cannot break a law that doesn't exist, and if it doesn't exist, they cannot be charged with breaking it. That is what Paul is saying in Romans 5:13 — People from Adam to Moses were not charged with breaking God's Law. The reason they cannot be charged is because during that time, **there was no law to break**! Sin is not imputed, or sin is not charged, where there is no law.

But did people still sin? Of course they did. They went against their conscience (which Paul talked about in Rom 1:18-32) and they most likely broke some of the laws of whatever government they were living under (Rom 13:1-7). But they did not sin in the same way Adam did by breaking a stated law of God, or the way that people who lived after Moses did, who also broke God's stated laws. And God's law is not retroactive either.

So Romans 5:13 *does not* mean that people did not sin. They did. **But they did not break the Law of Moses, for it had not yet been given,** nor did they break any written or ***spoken Law of God*** (sic!), for none had yet been given. But Paul's point in the surrounding context is that these people still died, because sin and death passed down to all people from Adam (Rom 5:14).

The only issue that I would take with that article is where he says, "or spoken Law of God, for none had yet been given". Joseph did not have the **WRITTEN** Law of Moses to guide him, a written form of the commandments, statutes and laws that came over 400 years later, but he did possess laws and commandments as I shall show, so where did they come from? If any man sinned

he WAS breaking God's law which **WAS NOT WRITTEN**, but it was given, but how? Let us consider how man first sinned.

It was by eating the forbidden fruit, *Gen 2:16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: Gen 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*. It had strange powers for by it, the person eating it would know good and evil, *Gen 3:5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods,* ***knowing good and evil*****.**

Going into God's garden was like going into the Temple. Incidentally, the Tree of Life seems to be symbolic of the seven branched candlestick, a seven branched tree, *Joh 1:4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men*. The candlestick in the sanctuary was symbolic of Christ, the Tree of Life, and the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was symbolic of the Law. The Garden of Eden was a type of the Temple.

Our forbearers knew immediately that they had done wrong, and they covered their private parts, presumably to shield their future offspring from God's gaze, *Gen 3:7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. Gen 3:8 And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.*

God knew that they had taken the fruit, *Gen 3:11 And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?* The upshot was that God expelled them from His garden, *Gen 3:22 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever: Gen 3:23 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. Gen 3:24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life*.

What happened to Adam and Eve, was exactly what Paul says happened to him, *Rom 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. Rom 7:8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. Rom 7:9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. Rom 7:10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. Rom 7:11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.*

Substituting the word “Tree” for the word “law”, we have, *Rom 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the* ***tree of the knowledge of good and evil*** *sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the* ***tree of the knowledge of good and evil****: for I had not known lust, except the* ***tree of the knowledge of good and evil*** *had said, Thou shalt not covet. Rom 7:8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the* ***tree of the knowledge of good and evil*** *sin was dead. Rom 7:9 For I was alive without the* ***tree of the knowledge of good and evil*** *once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. Rom 7:10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. Rom 7:11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.*

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was the law of God, ***not written*** but uttered in the lives of these two people, in an instant, and that must have been one of the scariest things that you could have had happen to you. The sudden influx of knowledge, the sudden feeling of what it was like to be as Gods, the tremendous responsibility of holding this knowledge of good and evil. What was the knowledge of “good and evil”? *Heb 5:14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use* ***have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil***.

I think that it was the knowledge that enabled sin to be discerned in the things which you did, and to know what was evil you also had to know what was good. An example of this is given in Deuteronomy in the blessings and cursing, in the good and the evil that would befall Israel, *Deu 28:2 And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. Deu 28:3 Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Deu 28:4 Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Deu 28:5 Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Deu 28:6 Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out.* Etc.....

Likewise the curses, the evil, *Deu 27:15 Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen. Deu 27:16 Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen. Deu 27:17 Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen.* Etc.....

Did this knowledge automatically get transferred to the offspring of Adam and Eve? If sin passed down the generations, for all had sinned in Adam, the knowledge of God could have passed down by the same means, *Rom 1:19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. Rom 1:20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Rom*

1:21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. I think that our first parents could also recount to their offspring the things which God had shown them, hence Abel's sacrifice. The law of God, became an oral lore among the people.

In addition there was a limited version of law from Noah's time, when they knew the prohibitions on clean and unclean animals, the prohibitions on blood and killing and later on the covenant of circumcision, which gave them some distinction and knowledge of defilement. But there was not a lot to direct you in God's ways and I suppose that direct communication with God was the way you were taught.

So we are left in a bit of a moral wilderness and we cannot really blame Joseph for not knowing all of the laws of God, and there were no accompanying punishments to be meted out for breaking the laws that existed, except for killing a man, and this did not always happen, so the laws did not get reinforced as with the Law of Moses.

How would a person in Joseph's time been converted? If we look at the progress of man, like Pilgrim's Progress, or to give it its full title, "The Pilgrim's Progress from this World to that which is to come: Delivered under the Similitude of a Dream", we see an allegory about a man named Christian who journeys from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. This is what being "converted" really means, it is about the trials of this life that lead one to see that the journey is about going to the kingdom of God and one passes from this life into Christ's kingdom, subject to your conforming to Christ's will and not your own shallow ideas of religion.

Bunyan's book makes little sense for those with a decisionalist approach to salvation. "Deciding for Christ". Reducing the saving work of God to a spectacular, instantaneous conversion experience is not in the Bible. Conversion is continuous and salvation is the end goal of a Christian life, *1Pe 1:9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.* "Salvation entailed a lifelong process of journeying through the wilderness of life, and conversion was requested at every moment. Christian's journey to the Celestial City was threatened at every turn. He was sustained by the company of Hopeful and Faithful but nearly deceived by Talkative and Ignorance. Throughout the story Christian was always most vulnerable whenever puffed up with presumption."

This "journey into life" is something that all of the saints, from the beginning of time have experienced. A spark ignites the flame of passion to become the Lord's servant, and the life that is lived shows it. Unfortunately that journey is littered with hypocrites and charlatans. But what actually happened to men that they went from that earthly kingdom to the heavenly kingdom? Why, they must be born again, as our Lord says. Speaking under the first covenant while the Law of Moses has full sway over men He said, *Joh 3:3 Jesus replied, "I tell you for*

certain that you must be born from above before you can see God's kingdom!" Joh 3:4 Nicodemus asked, "How can a grown man ever be born a second time?" Joh 3:5 Jesus answered: I tell you for certain that before you can get into God's kingdom, you must be born not only by water, but by the Spirit. Joh 3:6 Humans give life to their children. Yet only God's Spirit can change you into a child of God. Joh 3:7 Don't be surprised when I say that you must be born from above. Joh 3:8 Only God's Spirit gives new life. The Spirit is like the wind that blows wherever it wants to. You can hear the wind, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. Joh 3:9 "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. Joh 3:10 Jesus replied: How can you be a teacher of Israel ***and not know these things****?* CEV.

The new birth was necessary, a change into someone new was necessary, faith was necessary, *Rom 4:18 God promised Abraham a lot of descendants. And when it all seemed hopeless, Abraham still had faith in God and became the ancestor of many nations. Rom 4:19 Abraham's faith never became weak, not even when he was nearly a hundred years old. He knew that he was almost dead and that his wife Sarah could not have children. Rom 4:20 But Abraham never doubted or questioned God's promise. His faith made him strong, and he gave all the credit to God. Rom 4:21 Abraham was certain that God could do what he had promised. Rom 4:22 So God accepted him, Rom 4:23 just as we read in the Scriptures. But these words were not written only for Abraham. Rom 4:24 They were written for us, since we will also be accepted because of our faith in God, who raised our Lord Jesus to life. Rom 4:25 God gave Jesus to die for our sins, and he raised him to life, so that we would be made acceptable to God*. CEV.

All men must have the new birth or none can enter the kingdom, *Joh 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Joh 3:7* ***Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again***. Joseph must have been born again, or born from above if he was saved, and if he was saved, he was converted. Or as Paul says, *Rom 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Rom 8:30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified*.

97. Joseph in Mizraim.

Preparatory reading: Genesis Chapter 39

The new birth was brought about by what is called in the Old Testament, “circumcision of the heart”, *Deu 10:16 Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.....Deu 30:5 And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. Deu 30:6 And* ***the***

***LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart**, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live*.

Circumcision or מוּלָה was a physical sign of the covenant, *Gen 17:10 This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. Gen 17:11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. Gen 17:12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed*.

As with all earthly tokens it had a spiritual counterpart, *Col 2:10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: Col 2:11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands**, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision** of Christ: Col 2:12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. Col 2:13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasse*s; Sin was connected with the procreative organ and the renunciation of sin is seen in the act of circumcision, shown to be the circumcision of Christ, that which He does to us. It is the same as Deuteronomy 30:6, ***the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart***.

Joseph will undergo a second circumcision, in order to become a believer, but when this occurs is not clear, but he must get the light of Christ, as must every man, *Joh 1:9 That was the true Light, which lighteth **every man** that cometh into the world*.

We next find Joseph in Mizraim/Egypt, and far from being the number one son, he is a slave, *Gen 39:1 And Joseph was brought into Egypt, and Putiphar, an eunuch of Pharao, chief captain of the army, an Egyptian, bought him of the Ismaelites, by whom he was brought. Gen 39:2 And the Lord was with him, and he was a prosperous man in all things: and he dwelt in his master's house: Gen 39:3 Who knew very well that the Lord was with him, and made all that he did to prosper in his hand. Gen 39:4 And Joseph found favour in the sight of his master, and ministered to him: and being set over all by him, he governed the house committed to him, and all things that were delivered to him*: DRB.

Joseph does not rail against the God of Jacob, does not bemoan his lot, does not even make a plan to escape, *Gen 39:5 And the Lord blessed the house of the Egyptian for Joseph's sake, and multiplied all his substance, both at home and in the fields. Gen 39:6 Neither knew he any other thing, but the bread which he ate. And Joseph was of a beautiful countenance, and comely to behold. DRB.* I wonder whether Joseph felt that he had landed on his feet, and did not mind where he lived because anything was better than his brothers who were always carping at

him. Besides, he had an opportunity to shine on his own, to make a name for himself and not bathe in his father's glory. He could leave as a boy and return as a man, in his own right. He was rather good at what he did, as well as being an attractive young man with no competition from his brothers.

Being attractive was soon going to show itself as a set back because the eunuch's wife had her eye on him, *Gen 39:7 And after many days, his mistress cast her eyes on Joseph, and said: Lie with me. Gen 39:8 But he in no wise consenting to that wicked act said to her: Behold, my master hath delivered all things to me, and knoweth not what he hath in his own house: Gen 39:9 Neither is there anything which is not in my power, or that he hath not delivered to me, but thee, who art his wife; how then can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God*? DRB.

Joseph's response to the woman's advances is surprisingly mature coming from one so young and supposedly naive to the ways of the world. He rebuts her by refusing her, *Gen 39:10 With such words as these day by day, both the woman was importunate with the young man, **and he refused the adultery**.* DRB. I am not sure that his brothers would have stood their ground having been given such an open invitation to free sex, in fact there is a story in Chapter 38 which shows what they are like.

Chapter 38, the Chapter **before** the one we are reading says, *Gen 38:1 And it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. Gen 38:2 And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name was Shuah; and he took her, and went in unto her. Gen 38:3 And she conceived, and bare a son; and he called his name Er. Gen 38:4 And she conceived again, and bare a son; and she called his name Onan. Gen 38:5 And she yet again conceived, and bare a son; and called his name Shelah: and he was at Chezib, when she bare him. Gen 38:6 And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, whose name was Tamar*.

Have you got that, the chapter before the one where young Joseph goes into Mizraim/Egypt at the age of 17 years. Now work it out, how old was Judah when Joseph was 17? We see that Jacob served Laban for 7 years for Rachel, *Gen 29:20 And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her. Gen 29:21 And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her*. He waited seven years before he laid hands on her. He served another seven years for Rachel and her sister, *Gen 29:30 And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years*. So from that time he began having children and all told Jacob was with Laban twenty years, *Gen 31:41 Thus have I been **twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle**: and thou hast changed my wages ten times*. That's 20 years service in Laban's house.

That meant that over a thirteen year period (7 years without a wife then 7 years for Rachel, then 6 years for the cattle), Jacob began having his children, and Judah was the fourth child of Leah, *Gen 29:35 And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise the LORD: therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing*. If Judah was born in 4th year of that last 13 year period of service to Laban and Leah had two more children at some stage before Rachel conceived, *Gen 30:19 And Leah conceived again, and bare Jacob the sixth son. Gen 30:20 And Leah said, God hath endued me with a good dowry; now will my husband dwell with me, because I have born him six sons: and she called his name Zebulun. Gen 30:21 And afterwards she bare a daughter, and called her name Dinah*. Judah was born about 4th year of that 13 year period and Joseph was born about the 7th year of that 13 year period of service to Laban. In other words there was only about 4 years difference in age between Joseph and Judah.

Why is that important? If Genesis is sequential, then Judah, had three “grown up” children, all capable of marriage, when he was just 21 years old and Joseph was 17 years old. Impossible! So I am saying that this story of Judah, in Genesis Chapter 38, took place much later and was inserted here for a purpose. The story may have occurred during the lean years in Mizraim/Egypt, which occurred when Joseph was 37 years old, *Gen 41:46 And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. Gen 41:47 And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls*. By the time of the lean years, Joseph was 37 years old and Judah 41 years old and this seems a much more reasonable age for Judah’s sons to marry.

We see that neither of the first two sons of Judah gave Tamar a child, *Gen 38:6 And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, whose name was Tamar. Gen 38:7 And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him. Gen 38:8 And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother.* Judah withheld his third son from her, *Gen 38:11 Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter in law, Remain a widow at thy father's house, till Shelah my son be grown: for he said, Lest peradventure he die also, as his brethren did. And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house*. The people practiced the custom of the Levirate marriage, which became enshrined in the Law of Moses. A levirate marriage is literally a “marriage with a brother-in-law.” The word levirate, which has nothing to do with the tribe of Levi, comes from the Latin word **levir**, “a husband’s brother.” In ancient times, if a man died without a child, it was common for the man’s unmarried brother to marry the widow in order to provide an heir for the deceased. A widow would marry a brother-in-law, and the first son produced in that union was considered the legal descendant of her dead husband.

The Levirate marriage became part of the Law, *Deu 25:5 If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her.*

Deu 25:6 And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel.

Tamar, in order to force Judah into giving her his son plays the harlot, deceives Judah and is impregnated by him after Judah's wife died, *Gen 38:12 And in process of time the daughter of Shuah Judah's wife died; and Judah was comforted, and went up unto his sheepshearers to Timnath, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite*. She gets some tokens off of Judah so she can prove that she has been with him. When she is found to be pregnant, the big hypocrite Judah, the self-righteous "saint" wants Tamar executed for her sin, *Gen 38:24 And behold, after three months, they told Juda, saying: Thamar, thy daughter-in-law, hath played the harlot, and she appeareth to have a big belly. And Juda said: Bring her out that she may be burnt. Gen 38:25 But when she was led to execution, she sent to her father in law, saying: By the man, to whom these things belong, I am with child. See whose ring, and bracelet, and staff this is*. Out of this liaison came Christ.

This story, which I calculate happened much later than the story of Joseph and the eunuch's wife, sets a marked contrast between the behaviours of Joseph and Judah. They eventually become the heads of the two warring parties in Israel, Joseph, the head of Ephraim which became known as Samaria, and Judah the head of Judea but that is for another time. Young Joseph has followed his God and Judah has been led by his hormones.

If as I am supposing, the events of Genesis Chapter 38 occur **after** Chapter 39 and not **before**, nd nearer the time of the lean years, then this crisis brought the whole family together again, and it brought them together in Mizraim/Egypt. This Empire does some strange things to believers. As we first encounter it, it is a refuge and a benefactor for the people of God, *Gen 12:10 And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land*. The land was reminiscent of the garden of Eden, *Gen 13:10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, **even as the garden of the LORD**, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar*.

The sons of Jacob lived in Canaan after leaving Laban, and the Canaanitish influence did nothing to improve their standing with God. It seems that they did not hold their beliefs very dear, so this near neighbour Mizraim/Egypt was a proving ground of their faith, with Joseph being the first to go there. It was an Empire unlike the Canaanitish peoples whom God did not like, *Exo 23:28 And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee*. He did however have compassion on the Mizraimites, *Deu 23:7 Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he is thy brother: **thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian; because thou wast a stranger in his land.** Deu 23:8 The children that are begotten of them shall enter into the congregation of the LORD in their third generation*.

This land was to be a place where Israel was forged into a tool fit for the Lord, *Deu 4:20 But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace,* ***even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance****, as ye are this day*. The culture of Mizraim was opposed to Israel, *Exo 9:13 And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. Exo 9:14 For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. Exo 9:15 For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth*. None the less, even a godless society practicing magic and having other gods, can be a place where the wise can learn and sort his faith out just as Daniel did.

Joseph was to find this out in the “school of hard knocks”.

98. Joseph in Prison.

Preparatory reading: Genesis Chapter 40

Joseph gets sacked from his first job in Mizraim, although from a Divine perspective it is a promotion, *Gen 39:16 And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home. Gen 39:17 And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me: Gen 39:18 And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out*.

Potiphar thinks that he has been cuckolded and responds with anger, *Gen 39:19 And it came to pass when his lord heard the words of his wife which she spoke to him, saying, After this manner did thy bondman to me, that his wrath was kindled. Gen 39:20 And Joseph's lord took him and put him into the tower-house, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; and he was there in the tower-house. Gen 39:21 And Jehovah was with Joseph, and extended mercy to him, and gave him favour in the eyes of the chief of the tower-house. Gen 39:22 And the chief of the tower-house committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the tower-house; and whatever they had to do there he did. Gen 39:23 The chief of the tower-house looked not to anything under his hand, because Jehovah was with him; and what he did, Jehovah made it prosper.* Darby. From one “frying pan into another pan” he goes.

What was it in Joseph’s character that made him so likeable? I think Joseph was extremely reliable and if you gave him work you could rely on it being done well and if he did not know how to do it he would take the opportunity to find out. He had a “can do” attitude. You could give Joseph work and consider it done. Apart

from his competence, I think that Joseph was non-threatening, by which I mean he did not attempt to claw his way up the ladder of success. His masters would not feel threatened by a takeover because Joseph was not after their jobs. Another thing I suppose is that he was good at was multi-tasking and he could juggle with more than one ball at a time.

When he was put out of Potiphar's house he was again set for success, *Gen 40:1 And it came to pass after these things, that the cup-bearer of the king of Egypt and the baker offended their lord the king of Egypt. Gen 40:2 And Pharaoh was wroth with his two chamberlains—with the chief of the cup-bearers and with the chief of the bakers; Gen 40:3 and he put them in custody into the house of the captain of the life-guard, into the tower-house, into the place where Joseph was imprisoned. Gen 40:4 And the captain of the life-guard appointed Joseph to them, that he should attend on them. And they were several days in custody*. Darby.

Was this in part due to Potiphar, did Potiphar follow his progress? After the initial anger, Potiphar could have cooled down, realising his wife's frustration. This seems quite possible, *Gen 39:1 And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, a chamberlain of Pharaoh,* ***the captain of the life-guard****, an Egyptian, bought him of the hand of the Ishmaelites who had brought him down thither,* is the same man as in, *Gen 40:4 And* ***the captain of the life-guard*** *appointed Joseph to them, that he should attend on them. And they were several days in custody.* The CEV goes as far as to speculate that this man was Potiphar, *Gen 40:4 They spent a long time in prison, and* ***Potiphar, the official in charge of the palace guard,*** *made Joseph their servant*. CEV. The "officer in charge of the palace guard", theטַבָּחשַׂר = sar tabbach, is the chief butcher or executioner, Potiphar.

Joseph interprets the dreams of the two men but he did not give the interpretation of his own to his family, and neither does it appear, did they seek it, it seemed obvious.

1. *Gen 37:7 We were out in the field, tying up bundles of wheat. Suddenly my bundle stood up, and your bundles gathered around and bowed down to it."*
2. *Gen 37:9 Joseph later had another dream, and he told his brothers, "Listen to what else I dreamed. The sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowed down to me." CEV*.

The dreams put Joseph at the centre of two stories, and he must have thought about this a lot while in Mizraim, for there seemed no hope of him ever getting out of his servitude and fulfilling the promise of rising above his brethren, if that is what it meant.

There seems to be a difference in the dreams. **One dream is earthly**, the wheat sheaves harvested from the ground, and this was likely showing God's plan to deliver the brothers from famine when Joseph became the chancellor of Mizraim. **The second dream is heavenly**, there are celestial object bowing

down to Joseph making him not only the saviour of the world, but the Saviour of the Universe. Has he been given the vision of Christ, like David, *Act 2:29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Act 2:30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; Act 2:31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. Act 2:32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses*. I think so, and perhaps on thinking about his dream seriously, Joseph began to see that Christ, Jehovah Jesus was working in him.

I am not certain that Joseph was, to use our parlance, “converted” before the age of 17 years. That usually comes from a crisis and shakes our little world to the roots. Joseph had lived a sheltered life, and was his father’s favourite and I imagine that there was little that he lacked and all was done for him. When his brothers finally turn on him and sell him to the travelling merchants he was set adrift on the ocean of life without compass or rudder. He had no friends, family, he had nobody to turn to but to the Lord, and I think that at this point in his life, Joseph began to give serious thought about God, having been stripped of all things earthly.

The butler and the baker too, both have strange dreams full of imagery that does not give any clue as to what they mean, *Gen 40:9 And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, In my dream, behold, a vine was before me; Gen 40:10 And in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes: Gen 40:11 And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand. Gen 40:12 And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days: Gen 40:13 Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place: and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler*. Welcome to the strange world of dreams that can speak in another language to us. Dreams do not necessarily carry the interpretation to a person.

The dreams that we are dealing with are dreams that occur during sleep and a Biblical definition of them is found in Job, *Job 33:15 In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed;* It shows us that this is night sight, חִזָּיוֹן = chizzaayon, revelation or vision. It is a state where we are open to revelations from the Almighty, and the person receiving it does not have to be a believer.

According to the Bible, a vision is something that occurs when a man is awake, while a dream is something that occurs when a man is asleep. Some who study dreams say that we are always dreaming when we sleep, but we only remember the dreams right before we awake. This would actually fit with the scriptures in

several cases where men remember a dream that actually woke them up. https://www.learnthebible.org/what-does-the-bible-say-about-dreams.html

A frightening consequence of these dreams is that they are a reality to come in the future. People are being told about a certain future that they cannot escape. They are inexorably moving towards a predestinated future, a certainty. In the case of the butler and baker, their lives had led them to this point. From the circumstances of their birth in the land of Mizraim, from the opportunity to become skilled in winemaking and bakery, to becoming the chief of their trade, to serving the Pharaoh, each step had been choreographed by the Almighty, for good and for evil.

How does the Lord do this predestinating? It becomes more important to me, to think that He does this to me, and I am a captive creature, *Rom 9:18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Rom 9:19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Rom 9:20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Rom 9:21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour*?

I cannot explain it and I take it by faith. He does it. Somehow, all my decisions, good and bad, all my imaginings, the very things which make me unique, which led me to conclude my own omnipotent individuality, are, when it is viewed from the Divine perspective, things which were beyond my control, but were in His control. The false idea that I had freedom of choice, absolute freewill, independent thought are all brought crashing down, and I must see myself as a servant of His will, *Rom 9:19 …… For who hath resisted his will*?

All of us vain preachers of the Gospel, all striving to be better than each other, all of us thinking that we will leave some memoire to the next generation, giving them our wisdom, all thinking that we are the wisest and best when it comes to the knowledge of God and that God will reward us for our services, and invite us up to sit in the chief seats before Him, think too much of ourselves. We are mistaken, for God does not need us, being able to raise up out of the stones children to Himself. If we get to the kingdom, it is sufficient, like the sons of Korah sang having been forgiven their trespasses, *Psa 84:1 To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts*! …… *Psa 84:10 For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness*.

For Joseph these dreams held a special significance. He soon sees that the outcomes of the dreams occurred as predicted. This must have caused him to think that the dreams he had back in Canaan would also come true but in what sense would they come true? I believe that in the isolation he endured in Egypt, he had plenty of time to consider, and that he considered the God he was

dealing with. If you think that this is fanciful, then think again, for this is the first time that the Covenant God appears to be with Joseph, *Gen 39:2 And **Jehovah was with Joseph**, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.* Darby. This is Jehovah Jesus, the Creator of man, the Covenant God, *Joh 1:3 All things received being through him, and without him not one thing received being which has received being. Joh 1:4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men*. Darby.

The butler and the baker wanted to know the meaning of their dreams, but sadly dreams do not always bode well or have good outcomes. Pilate's wife shares with her husband a frightening dream and tells him to spare Joseph. I wonder how many of our dreams are forgotten, *Job 33:15 In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed*, because they have no interpreter like Joseph, *Gen 40:8 And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you*. Are all dreams sent to us by God, *Job 33:14 For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. Job 33:15 In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed*;

The Bible clearly tells us that dreams, and their waking equivalent, visions, are God's favoured mode of communication. It is the way God describes his own speech, *Num 12:6 And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, **I Jehovah will make myself known to him in a vision,** I will speak to him in a dream.....Hos 12:10 And I have spoken to the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and **by means of the prophets have I used similitudes**.....Act 2:17 And it shall be in the last days, saith God, that I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and **your elders shall dream with dreams**;* Even though we may not value dreams and visions as a form of Divine communication, God seems to have good reasons to prefer them.

Joseph, sitting in the prison, had much to think about. Was God communicating with him and why? Was this the reason he had ended up here, miles from home, to think about this or is he one of the millions of expendable souls wandering aimlessly through God's universe without any purpose?

Once you are on side with the Lord of the Universe, then anything and everything is your possibility, *1Co 3:19 For what this world considers to be wisdom is nonsense in God's sight. As the scripture says, "God traps the wise in their cleverness"; 1Co 3:20 and another scripture says, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are worthless." 1Co 3:21 No one, then, should boast about what human beings can do. Actually everything belongs to you: Co 3:22 Paul, Apollos, and Peter; this world, life and death, the present and the future—all these are yours, 1Co 3:23 and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God*.

99. Joseph's God. Part 1

Preparatory reading: Genesis Chapter 32

Joseph was fortunate in some ways to live in a world that had not developed as far as it has today. Religion was still very much a matter for individuals, take for instance Job, who was a near contemporary to Joseph, he had a heightened sense of sin and made atonement for his family without a priesthood, *Job 1:4 And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. Job 1:5 And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually*.

In that far off world the idea of big religious corporations had not come into existence. Fat bloated organisations, denominations, straddling the masses of the wilfully ignorant and terminally stupid, telling each one what to believe in. Like public corporations they rise today, similar to the BBC, with hundreds of unnecessary jobs, all clouding the issues that matter. Dressing up like modern mystics, wizards of knowledge, but not so in Joseph's time and I think that they had in those days a greater purity of thought not clouded with the incense of man. The religious corporations just did not exist, the corporation of the Anglicans, the corporation of the Methodists, the corporation of the JW's, the corporation of the Mormons, the corporation of the Baptists, big businesses all claiming to know the way to God, and in the process misleading millions of souls to their deaths.

There was little of the written Scripture and I assume that it was generally transmission by oral tradition or special revelation, but what was handed down was precious and revealing. Having been taken out of his familiar circumstances, at the age of 17 years, Joseph encounters "Jehovah", *Gen 39:2 And Jehovah was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian*. Darby. What did Joseph know about God? He would have known that mankind was created by God, indeed the whole universe was made by Him and everything in it, *Gen 2:4 These are the histories of the heavens and the earth, when they were created, in the day that* ***Jehovah Elohim*** *made earth and heavens*. Darby.

He knew the Creator God had a name, Jehovah Elohim. It was not a generic God that is like a consumer product having no brand name or registered trademark, a term you used to describe "god" which could mean many things to many people. The God of Creation had a name, Jehovah Elohim which we find millennia later is in fact Jesus, *Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God. Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made*. Did Joseph have that awareness that the Creator God was Jesus?

Joseph would have known about “theophanies”, ”God manifestations” or “Christophanies” because they had appeared many times to his ancestors. Theophanies in the Old Testament anticipate and foreshadow the permanent coming of God into creation in the incarnation of the Son. The person who walked in the garden of Eden was a Christophany, *Gen 3:8 And they heard the voice of Jehovah Elohim, walking in the garden in the cool of the day. And Man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah Elohim, in the midst of the trees of the garden*. Since God is not known by human eyes, the only way we can observe Him is in the person of His Son, *Joh 1:18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him*.

Joseph’s great grandfather, Abraham, had encountered this phenomenon at least twice, once when he was going to offer up his son Isaac, but was prevented by the Angel of the Lord, *Gen 22:11 And **the Angel of Jehovah** called to him from the heavens, and said, Abraham, Abraham! And he said, Here am I. Gen 22:12 And he said, Stretch not out thy hand against the lad, neither do anything to him; for now I know that thou fearest God, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son , **from me**. Gen 22:13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, behind was a ram caught in the thicket by its horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt-offering instead of his son. Gen 22:14 And Abraham called the name of that place **Jehovah-jireh**; as it is said at the present day, On the mount of Jehovah will be provided.* Darby. Isaac, Joseph’s grandfather, Isaac, must also have been aware of the Christophany also.

Dr Gill comments,

> **And the Angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven**,.... Not a created angel, but the eternal one, the Son of God, who perhaps appeared in an human form, and spoke with an articulate voice, as be frequently did; for that this was a divine Person is clear from his swearing by himself, and renewing the promise unto Abraham.

The other occasion was when three men appeared to him at his camp, *Gen 18:1 And **Jehovah appeared to him** by the oaks of Mamre. And he sat at the tent-door in the heat of the day. Gen 18:2 And he lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold, three men standing near him. And when he saw them , he ran to meet them from the tent-door, and bowed himself to the earth, Gen 18:3 and said, Lord, if now I have found favour in thine eyes, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant*. Abraham pleads with Jehovah for the righteous in Sodom, while the other two men go off towards Sodom, *Gen 18:25 Far be it from thee to do so, to slay the righteous with the wicked, that the righteous should be as the wicked—far be it from thee! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right? Gen 18:26 And Jehovah said, If I find at Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will forgive all the place for their sakes*.

Joseph's father, Jacob, had wrestled with a Christophany, *Gen 32:28 And he said, Thy name shall not henceforth be called Jacob, but Israel; for thou hast wrestled with Elohim, and with men, and hast prevailed. Gen 32:29 And Jacob asked and said, Tell me , I pray thee, thy name. And he said, How is it that thou askest after my name? And he blessed him there. Gen 32:30 And Jacob called the name of the place* ***Peniel****—For I have seen Elohim face to face, and my life has been preserved*.

The boys must have asked questions of their old father, when they all sat together on the starlit evenings, pondering the God of the heavens. Like all children they would have been fascinated by the old stories and would have asked them to be retold again and again. What did Abraham their great grandfather see? What did Jehovah look like? Jacob would recall the occasion when he wrestled with God and got injured as a result, *Gen 32:30 Jacob said, "I have seen God face to face, and I am still alive." So he named the place Peniel. Gen 32:31 The sun was coming up as Jacob was leaving Peniel. He was limping because he had been struck on the hip, Gen 32:32 and the muscle on his hip joint had been injured. That's why even today the people of Israel don't eat the hip muscle of any animal*. CEV. They had often wondered why Jacob had a limp, and this was the cause, and he went around bearing the mark of this crippling injury for the rest of his life and that is why they never ate the hip steak, (rump steak?) Although this is not tabled in the Law of Moses, it was kept and still is today, as the Mishnah (Danby) says,

> 7. 1 The law of the sinew of the hip is binding both in the Land [of Israel and outside the Land, both during the time of the Temple and **after the time of the Temple**; both for unconsecrated beasts and for animal offerings; moreover it applies to cattle and to wild animals, to the right thigh or to the left. But it does not apply to birds since they have no hollow [of the thigh]…….
>
> 6. [The law of the sinew of the hip] applies to clean beasts and not to unclean. R. Judah says: To unclean also. R. Judah said: Was not the sinew of the hip forbidden from the time of the sons of Jacob when unclean beasts were still permitted to them? They answered: It was enjoined from mount Sinai, but written down in its [present] place.

The Chinese word for the Kai Feng Jewish community was "the people who remove the sinew." So Joseph knew of this and I suggest was familiar with Jesus although I do not think that he knew Him exactly as the Messiah. He knew Him as Elohim the Creator and he knew Jehovah maker of the Covenant. Both names are brought together in Genesis, *Gen 2:4These are the histories of the heavens and the earth, when they were created, in the day that* ***Jehovah Elohim*** *made earth and heavens.* But look at Genesis Chapter 1, *Gen 1:1 In the beginning* ***Elohim*** *created the heaven and the earth*. Jehovah is used to qualify God, Elohim, and tells us that the Creator is also the Covenant God. How blessed was Joseph to speak the language and to understand the names of his God.

We have those modern Jews who dare not speak the Name of Jehovah, and sound a bell instead of speaking it when reading the Law. They are totally wrong to put a prohibition upon it, for how else will we know the Jehovah of our father's, *Exo 3:13 And Moses said Elohim, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, Elohim of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? Exo 3:14 And Elohim said to Moses, I AM THAT I AM. And he said,* ***Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel: I AM hath sent me unto you****. Exo 3:15 And Elohim said moreover to Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel: Jehovah, Elohim of your fathers, Elohim of Abraham, Elohim of Isaac, and Elohim of Jacob, hath sent me unto you.* ***This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations****.*

Joseph knew the wonderful works of Jehovah Elohim,

- Jehovah Elohim made earth and heavens
- Jehovah Elohim formed Man, dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life
- Jehovah Elohim planted a garden in Eden eastward
- Jehovah Elohim made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; and the tree of life, in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
- Jehovah Elohim said, It is not good that Man should be alone; I will make him a helpmate, his like
- And the serpent was more crafty than any animal of the field which Jehovah Elohim had made
- Jehovah Elohim sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken

This was a mighty person, an all powerful Elohim that had made absolutely everything by just saying the word, "let it be" and it was. No matter how much Joseph or any man, come to that, said anything, it could not come to pass. No wishes or words could bring anything into existence. How strange that at Joseph's proximity to the Great Flood, and The Creation, he just accepted it. There were no words of modification to these stories until the very recent centuries, no attempt to offer an alternative account of the Creation. But look what has happened, not only do we doubt the existence of a Creator, we have changed the narrative on sin and the Saviour.

Joseph did not critique "God", he accepted what Elohim had revealed about Himself, and He built his life upon that. Nearly 2000 years before Jesus uttered the words, *Mat 7:24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock*, Joseph was doing just that, he was building upon the words of Jesus, Jehovah Jesus, the Creator of the worlds.

Joseph was beginning to see that Jehovah Elohim, who could say things into being, whose voice could activate life from non-life had a power that transcended that of mortal men. Elohim had revealed Himself as the Almighty, El Shaddai, *Gen 17:1 And Abram was ninety-nine years old, when Jehovah appeared to Abram, and said to him, I am the Almighty *God* אני־אל שדי*: walk before my face, and be perfect*. He had appeared to all of the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as El Shaddai.

It began to dawn on Joseph, that a God who had the power to create a world, had the power to bring events that were future into present consciousness, *Rom 4:17 as the Scripture says, "I have made you the father of many nations." That is, the promise is in force in the sight of God in whom he put his faith, the God who can bring the dead to life* ***and can call to Himself the things that do not exist as though they did***. Williams.

Joseph had come to see that the dreams of men were the reality of Elohim, and whatever He decided to show man would doubtless come to pass. He came to see the dream prophecies of the two courtiers of Pharaoh inevitably coming to pass. It was not that Elohim had happened to see a future over which He had no control, He was in control*, Gen 40:8 And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them,* ***Do not interpretations belong to Elohim****? tell me them, I pray you*. They did indeed belong to no other than Elohim the interpreter of dreams.

100. Joseph's God. Part 2

Preparatory reading: Exodus Chapter 6

As Joseph began to see the power in Elohim to create, he also saw the power to determine and govern the creation, but not only govern it in the present, but to govern it at the same time at any point in the future, *Rom 4:17 as the Scripture says, "I have made you the father of many nations." That is, the promise is in force in the sight of God in whom he put his faith, the God who can bring the dead to life* ***and can call to Himself the things that do not exist as*** אל עליון ***though they did***. Williams. As far as Joseph was concerned it was a world of infinite possibilities, but as far as God was concerned it was a certainty, and that certainty culminated in Jesus.

Joseph was familiar with Elohim under a range of different titles, *Gen 14:18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God = El Elyon*. Mankind has many of the attributes of Elohim including creativity, *Gen 1:27 So Elohim created man in his own image, in the image of Elohim created he him; male and female created he them.* This is perhaps Elohim in time, man, but not Elohim in Eternity. So a man could be

called a god, *Joh 10:33 The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. Joh 10:34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are* ***gods****? Joh 10:35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; Joh 10:36 Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?* That is quoting the Psalm, *Psa 82:6 I have said, Ye are* ***Elohim*** *and all of you are children of the most High.*

In the AV we read, *Exo 21:6 then his master shall bring him before the judges, and shall bring him to the door, or to the door-post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall be his bondman for ever.* This is an interesting translation of the verse, because it uses two names of God, Adonai = Master and Elohim = Judges, *Exo 21:6 then his Adonai shall bring him before Elohim, and shall bring him to the door, or to the door-post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall be his bondman forever.*

El Elyon elevates God to the highest Elohim, *Psa 97:9 For thou, Jehovah, El Elyon above all the earth; thou art exalted exceedingly above all* ***Elohim***. This is the top position. Joseph also knew about another name, *Gen 15:8 And he said, Adonai Jehovah* **אדני יהוה**, *how shall I know that I shall possess it?* This is a name of Christ, the Messiah*, Luk 20:41 Jesus asked, "Why do people say that the Messiah will be the son of King David? Luk 20:42 In the book of Psalms, David himself says, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right side Luk 20:43 until I make your enemies into a footstool for you.' Luk 20:44 David spoke of the Messiah as his Lord, so how can the Messiah be his son?"* This is a direct quote from Psalm 110, *Psa 110:1 Psalm of David. Jehovah said unto Adonai* יהוה לאדני*, Sit at my right hand, until I put thine enemies as footstool of thy feet.*

Joseph also knew the Almighty, El Shaddai, *Exo 6:3 And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as El Shaddai* **אל שדי***; but by my name Jehovah I was not made known to them. Exo 6:4 And I established also my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were sojourners. Exo 6:5 And I have heard also the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians have forced to serve, and I have remembered my covenant. Exo 6:6 Therefore say unto the children of Israel, I am Jehovah, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their service, and I will redeem you with a stretched-out arm, and with great judgments.* Jehovah was not known as the covenant deliverer until the Exodus, but He was known. **Joseph knew his "God" better than most Christians.**

How did Joseph worship his God, Elohim, Jehovah, Adonai, El Shaddai, El Elyon? He was a stranger in a strange land, he was alone, humanly speaking, and the land of Mizraim was a heathen nation with plenty of occultists, *Exo 7:11 Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers (whisperers): now the magicians (horoscopists) of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their*

enchantments. All things were against him, and according to those ecclesiastical zealots of our age, he would have soon failed in the faith without a "church" to go to, a coal out of a fire, but contrary to their opinion he was stronger because he had faith in the Almighty not in a man's organisation.

So with no church to go to, no sacred place to worship at, no brothers to share the things of Elohim with, no Bible to read, no rituals to follow and we don't read about Joseph sacrificing (but I suppose because it is not mentioned does not mean it did not happen), no Tabernacle, no priesthood, no Sabbath of rest, no set feasts, no Mosaic Law, how did Joseph cultivate his faith? He had worked hard as a servant but did not get recognized for it, but came into his own at the age of 30 still as a servant. Despite being the object of his father Jacob's special love, he was mocked by his family, he was sold for 20 pieces of silver, he was stripped of his robe, he was delivered up to the Gentiles (Egyptians), he was falsely accused (by Potiphar's wife) but faithful in temptation, he was thrown into prison, brought before rulers, he delivers his brethren, he is God's instrument at the hands of the Gentiles to bless his people, he gives hungry people bread, and at last though, all must bow their knee before him.

There is something about his life, which you can see, strangely mirrors Christ's life. Joseph was living a life not unlike Christ's some 2,000 years before Him, and 430 years **before** Moses and the Exodus, *Exo 12:41 And it came to pass at the end of the* ***four hundred and thirty years****, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt*. Christ shows Himself before Moses in a shadow, before the Law. Did Joseph know that he was playing the part of Jesus before the incarnation? Did Joseph see that Christ was first and foremost as the deliverer of all men?

I think that the dreams of his youth and the growing awareness of Elohim's providence on his behalf, gave him lots to meditate upon, and was a cause of much praise and worship, produced much fruit of the spirit within him, and was the grounds of his contentment with his lot, and made him search what he knew of El Shaddai, *1Pe 1:10 Some prophets told how kind God would be to you, and they searched hard to find out more about the way you would be saved. 1Pe 1:11* ***The Spirit of Christ was in them and was telling them how Christ would suffer and would then be given great honour****. So they searched to find out exactly who Christ would be and when this would happen. 1Pe 1:12 But they were told that they were serving you and not themselves. They preached to you by the power of the Holy Spirit, who was sent from heaven. And their message was only for you, even though angels would like to know more about it*. CEV.

Joseph was certainly not alone and as he meditated upon his own two dreams and it seems likely that he saw them with greater clarity as "**The Spirit of Christ which was in him**" struggled to find expression. As a prophet (his dreams spoke of future things), he found another greater Spirit working within, giving him an assurance of the future,

1. *We were out in the field, tying up bundles of wheat. Suddenly my bundle stood up, and your bundles gathered around and bowed down to it.*
2. *The sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowed down to me.*

“Time” can be represented by anything, like “three vine branches” or “three baskets” of bread, *"In my dream I saw a vine with three branches. As soon as it budded, it blossomed, and its grapes became ripe. I held the king's cup and squeezed the grapes into it, then I gave the cup to the king." Joseph said: This is the meaning of your dream.* ***The three branches stand for three days****, and in three days the king will pardon you. He will make you his personal servant again, and you will serve him his wine, just as you used to do....."I also had a dream. In it I was carrying three breadbaskets stacked on top of my head. The top basket was full of all kinds of baked things for the king, but birds were eating them." Joseph said: This is the meaning of your dream.* ***The three baskets are three days****.* In a dream prophecy, anything in the physical universe can be representative of something else.

In Pharaoh’s dream, cows stood for years, *Gen 41:26 The* ***seven good cows stand for seven years****, and so do the seven good heads of grain. Gen 41:27 The* ***seven skinny, ugly cows that came up later also stand for seven years****, as do the seven bad heads of grain that were scorched by the east wind.* ***The dreams mean there will be seven years when there won't be enough grain****.* CEV. The dreams had a certain economy about them. The core message to the cupbearer, the baker, the famine affecting cattle, the famine affecting the harvest, was all interwoven with the timescale in which they would occur, but would you know the “time” without being told? No, but the meaning was given by Elohim, *Gen 40:8 And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to* ***Elohim****? tell me them, I pray you.* No man has any power to interpret dreams because no man knows the future.

And what of the dreams that were given to Joseph in his youth? The first one seems fairly obvious, **if** it was foretelling of Joseph in Mizraim saving the family, “*your bundles gathered around and bowed down to it”*, *Gen 42:5 And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan. Gen 42:6 And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and* ***bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth****.* It seems to be a prophecy of Joseph’s ascent during the famine, but I find this at odds with the images he sees. If Joseph was to be the provider of grain to the stricken brothers, surely they would have been shown as “*thin and scorched by the east wind*”, but they are not and are presented as healthy sheaves, besides, this dream occurred at harvest time and it is not about famine. Joseph’s sheaf “arose” and the other sheaves, that were the sons of “Israel”, bowed down to him. The brothers “Israel” jump to a conclusion as to what it meant and that in turn causes us to see the same interpretation, *Gen 37:8 And his brethren said to him,* ***Shalt thou***

indeed reign over us*? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words*. This translation is better, *Gen 37:8 And his brethren said to him, Wilt thou indeed be* ***a king over us? wilt thou indeed rule over us****? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams and for his words*. Darby.

This reminds us of the story of the talents, *Luk 19:12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. Luk 19:13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. Luk 19:14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying,* ***We will not have this man to reign over us***. The dream says more of Christ than Joseph, in addition the dream is not interpreted as coming to pass in Joseph day and it is not mentioned in Genesis as fulfilled.

When we look at the Scripture we are often drawn to an earthly, manmade interpretation, it is always about ME, we always see ourselves first, but Scripture is more than us, it has a greater scope than our redemption. Looking down the road of history yet to come, we see ourselves first, in the foreground, but who is the person in the far distance, at the end of the road, the completion of that journey? Why, it never was about us although we tried to fit the picture, to steal some of the glory from God, to usurp His position as Lord of Lords, but it was all about Jesus.

As the Scripture says, *Php 2:10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; Php 2:11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.....Col 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. Col 1:19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;*

That is why Joseph did not have a fulfillment to his first dream, because it waits for the end of time for its fulfillment. The brothers of Christ will all do well, but at the harvest, *Mat 13:37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; Mat 13:38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; Mat 13:39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.*

The children of Jacob, the Jews, had not seen the Messiah, and they would not accept Him as their ruler, but Elohim would make them willing, *Luk 1:31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. Luk 1:32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: Luk 1:33* ***And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.***

101. Joseph’s God. Part 3

Preparatory reading: Luke Chapter 15

Joseph knew a lot about his God and was unencumbered by the modern concept of the institutional church. He accepted Elohim and what he was told about Him without question and obeyed Him absolutely. As a youth he had dreamed two dreams,

1. *We were out in the field, tying up bundles of wheat. Suddenly my bundle stood up, and your bundles gathered around and bowed down to it.*
2. *The sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowed down to me.*

We saw the first dream interpreted by the brothers, who said, *"Do you really think you are going to be king and rule over us?"* They could not accept the younger brother being a king over them, and it is hard when someone young speaks wisdom and has prophecies. But they failed to see that this would be the history of their race, in rejecting the Messiah. Their attitude is prophetic of their nation.

Joseph is a bit more reticent over his second dream, “*The sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowed down to me”*, and appears to only tell it to his father, “*When he told his father about this dream, his father became angry and said, "What's that supposed to mean? Are your mother and I and your brothers all going to come and bow down in front of you?"”* No they wouldn’t because his mum was dead! But he saw the point because he had usurped his older brother, *Gen 25:22 Before Rebekah gave birth, she knew she was going to have twins, because she could feel them inside her, fighting each other. She thought, "Why is this happening to me?" Finally, she asked the LORD why her twins were fighting, Gen 25:23 and he told her: "Your two sons will become two separate nations. The younger of the two will be stronger,* ***and the older son will be his servant****."*

Jacob must have been convicted that “what goes around, comes around” and whatever was going to happen would see him in a lesser place. What did the dream foretell? I suggest that it was similar to the first dream, but this time not looking at the nation of Israel submitting to Christ, but the whole universe submitting to Christ. “Sun and moon bow down before Him, dwellers all in time and space”, the words by Henry Francis Lyte, sum up the dream prophecy of Joseph. The end of time will see everything in its right place, *Mat 24:29 Right after those days of suffering, "****The sun will become dark, and the moon will no longer shine. The stars will fall, and the powers in the sky will be shaken.****" Mat 24:30 Then a sign will appear in the sky. And there will be the Son*

of Man. All nations on earth will weep when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Mat 24:31 At the sound of a loud trumpet, he will send his angels to bring his chosen ones together from all over the earth. CEV.

Eleven years later, after Joseph has his dream, aged 28 years, the two stewards dream their dreams, and a full two years after this, Pharaoh dreams his dreams, *Gen 41:1 And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river*. The Lord is not in a hurry to bring his purpose to pass, neither will He be rushed to bring Joseph out of prison. Mizraim, Egypt, also will have to be dealt with, and the principalities and powers at work against the Lord, must also be dealt with. When all is ready, the plan is put into place and commenced.

How kind that the Lord sent the years of plenty before the years of famine. He does not always do this*, 2Sa 24:12 to take a message to David. Gad went to David and told him: You must choose one of three ways for the LORD to punish you: **Will there be seven years when the land won't grow enough food for your people**? Or will your enemies chase you and make you run from them for three months? Or will there be three days of horrible disease in your land? Think about it and decide, because I have to give your answer to God, who sent me*. CEV.

In a way the famine in Mizraim serves as a judgement for sin as well as an opportunity for redemption, *Deu 28:15 Israel, today I am giving you the laws and teachings of the LORD your God. And if you don't obey them all, he will put many curses on you. Deu 28:16 Your businesses and farms will fail. Deu 28:17* ***You won't have enough bread to eat****. Deu 28:18 You'll have only a few children, your crops will be small, and your herds of cattle and flocks of sheep and goats won't produce many young. Deu 28:19 The LORD will make you fail in everything you do*. CEV. Mizraim had turned from the Lord to the occult and it would suffer for it.

The writers of horoscopes and the wise men couldn't figure out the meaning of the dream, *Gen 41:8 And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the* ***magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof****: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.* This is comforting news to us who trust in God, because the world's children will never know what God is doing, even if He tells them what is coming, as Isaiah said later of Egypt, *Isa 19:11 Surely the princes of Zoan are fools, the counsel of the wise counsellors of Pharaoh is become brutish: how say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings? Isa 19:12 Where are they?* ***where are thy wise men? and let them tell thee now, and let them know what the LORD of hosts hath purposed upon Egypt***.

The dream of Pharaoh was the trigger for the start of this process, and after the “butler” remembered how Joseph had given him the meaning of is dream, he is summoned to court, *Gen 41:14 Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh*. Poor Joseph had been languishing in the prison for an additional two years, and I imagine that he had the appearance of John the Baptist or Robinson Crusoe as he is summoned to run to the palace. His hair long and dirty, his beard unkempt, his clothes dirty and rotten, he was in no fit state to be seen by a Pharaoh.

Joseph does not come from prison as he is, neglected, unkempt for he is conscious of who he represents and so he prepares himself, King against king, the Lord of all the Earth’s ambassador will meet with Pharaoh. He will not only interpret the dream, but he is also the architect of the saving plan. **The saving plan** he would use to deliver Pharaoh from the famine, would deliver Israel into captivity, would defeat a future Pharaoh and would deliver Israel.

In ancient Egypt, food scarcities usually occurred during periods of civil war, when there was a lack of strong central government, or following an extended period when the Nile did not flood sufficiently to irrigate the land. To combat starvation, ancient Egyptians dug canals for irrigation and amassed grain into storehouses. According to the Bible, Joseph stored up grain during seven years of good harvests so that the people would not starve during the following seven years of famine.

This famine in Mizraim will have many future consequences. It will bring the whole land into total dependence on Pharaoh, *Gen 47:19 Don't let us starve and our land be ruined. If you'll give us grain to eat and seed to plant, we'll sell ourselves and our land to the king. We'll become his slaves. Gen 47:20 The famine became so severe that Joseph finally bought every piece of land in Egypt for the king Gen 47:21 and made everyone the king's slaves, Gen 47:22 except the priests. The king gave the priests a regular food allowance, so they did not have to sell their land. Gen 47:23 Then Joseph said to the people, "You and your land now belong to the king. I'm giving you seed to plant, Gen 47:24 but one-fifth of your crops must go to the king. You can keep the rest as seed or as food for your families." Gen 47:25* ***"Sir, you have saved our lives!" they answered. "We are glad to be slaves of the king."*** CEV. Pharaoh will cease to be a king over his Lord’s, and becomes an absolute dictator.

This will lead to a religious unity under a state sponsored ruler, the rise of the state “church” where all inside it were subject to it and of course, God’s judgements against it. No longer free to follow their own ways, they will follow the state gods of Mizraim and we know that leads to a direct conflict with Jehovah.

Israel will under a later Pharaoh become slaves and suffer under the oppression of their masters. But there is something that we forget in our rejoicing at their

deliverance from oppression and the judgement upon Mizraim, and it is this, the people of Israel were as great a sinners as the people of Mizraim. What singled them out was their apparent desire to serve Jehovah, and this was put to the test at the first Passover feast. The outcome of this is the famous Exodus from the land of Mizraim.

Whether Joseph knew this or had an inkling about the future of the nation we do not know, but again we know that the Spirit of Christ was in him. God was certainly with him for the Pharaoh does not even question Joseph about his interpretation of the dream prophecy, and follows Joseph advice to the letter, *Gen 41:33 Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Gen 41:34 Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years. Gen 41:35 And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. Gen 41:36 And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine*.

This is amazing, the man who until a few minutes ago was unknown to Pharaoh, who did not have a CV, who had only one reference (the Butler), who was doing time in prison, a foreigner from a class of people that were unclean to Mizraimites, is suddenly a trusted man, so trusted that he would be second to Pharaoh in the land, *Gen 41:38 And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? Gen 41:39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: Gen 41:40 Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. Gen 41:41 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt*. Yes, God was with Joseph, no doubt about it.

Gen 41:42 And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; Gen 41:43 And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. Gen 41:44 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt. Gen 41:45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name ***Zaphnathpaaneah****; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt. Gen 41:46 And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. Gen 41:47 And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handful*s.

The words **צָפְנַת פַּעְנֵחַ** = ***Zaphnathpaaneah*** means a number of things. Some say it means “Saviour of the World”, the Targum Onkelos (1st century AD) gives the meaning of the name as "the man to whom hidden things are revealed";

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, "the man who revealeth mysteries"; Josephus (c. AD 94), "a finder of mysteries".

In the story of “The prodigal son” his father restores him to the family and does something else, he puts the first or best robe on him (a στολή = stolay*),* he puts a ring on his finger (δακτύλιος = daktulios), and a pair of sandals on his feet, *Luk 15:22But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet* (ὑπόδημα = hupodēma). Why does Luke go into such detail and be so specific about what items the father gives the son? Why not just say his father gave him some new clothes?

You may have seen part of the prodigal’s clothing before in scripture, for it was given when Joseph attained his position of chief steward to Pharaoh, *Gen 41:42* ***And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen****, and put a gold chain about his neck;*

The words for ring and robe are exactly the same in the LXX as in Luke’s Gospel. Only the chain if office is different, although the sandals (ὑπόδημα = hupodēma) may have signified the same thing, the office or the lordship over the property. Let me explain.

There was a ritual in Israel if a man would not take his brothers widow to wife, *Deu 25:7And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. Deu 25:8 Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; Deu 25:9 Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. Deu 25:10And his name shall be called in Israel,* ***The house of him that hath his shoe loosed*****.** The loosing of the ὑπόδημα**.**

We see this done again in the book of Ruth, *Rth 4:5 Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. Rth 4:6 And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it. Rth 4:7 Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel*. Again, the loosing of the ὑπόδημα.

The sandal symbolised ownership of the land, ownership of the inheritance, for they are the same in Israel. The land was symbolised by the sandal and taking it off was removal of ownership. So stewardship of the land, symbolised by the

chain of office in Mizraim was equivalent to the sandal in Israel. And you can see that John the Baptist, the greatest prophet of the Old Testament, was not going to redeem Israel. Only Jesus could, Joh *1:27 He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.* John would not remove the ὑπόδημα.

There is so much of the New Tesrament in Joseph's life that you really get the impression that he is taking a peak into the future and bringing to the past, Jesus.

102. Joseph's God. Part 4

Preparatory reading: Genesis Chapter 42

One wonders why the brothers of Joseph needed to go into Mizraim to survive in view of the promise of God, *Gen 35:9 And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him. Gen 35:10 And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. Gen 35:11 And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; Gen 35:12 And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land*.

One also wonders why the Scripture takes up so much time with the famine in Mizraim and the charade Joseph plays with his brother's? Joseph appears to treat his brothers harshly, and he lies to them on occasion, why? Joseph could have greeted his brother's the first time he met them, and they would have still bowed down to him, not necessarily with sincerity, but he would have done as our Lord has asked of us*, Mat 5:23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Mat 5:24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Mat 5:25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison*.

Joseph seems to drag out the reconciliation, and by this seems to be getting his revenge. If he didn't want reconciliation, then why bother to even see his brothers, he could have just let them join the queue with the other people and let them get the grain without him seeing them. Or he could have stopped them taking the grain and not bothered to see them. There were plenty of ways of dealing with the situation, but Joseph chose this one, the one involving a lot of heartache to the brothers and to himself.

The famine extended to Canaan, but we have no record of the Canaanites contributing grain during the good years. Yet Pharaoh allows the Canaanites to buy grain from them, although they have not contributed. Mizraim was a very generous nation. It is a place of refuge for the stranger, a place of protection but it also served to isolate you from your enemies, *Mat 2:13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. Mat 2:14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: Mat 2:15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son*.

It was also a place of correction when trying to avoid God's punishment, *Jer 42:14 Saying, No; but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread; and there will we dwell: Jer 42:15 And now therefore hear the word of the LORD, ye remnant of Judah; Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; If ye wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt, and go to sojourn there; Jer 42:16 Then it shall come to pass, that the sword, which ye feared, shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine, whereof ye were afraid, shall follow close after you there in Egypt; and there ye shall die*.

Mizraim was a strange place to conduct this family affair, but in doing so it caused the sons to leave Canaan, which seemed like a good idea because they had developed the ways of Canaan and they were not a very good example to them either. Their behaviour to Hamor and Shechem was treacherous, *Gen 34:1 And Dina the daughter of Lia went out to see the women of that country. Gen 34:2 And when Sichem the son of Hemor the Hevite, the prince of that land, saw her, he was in love with her: and took her away, and lay with her, ravishing the virgin. Gen 34:3 And his soul was fast knit unto her; and whereas she was sad, he comforted her with sweet words*. DRB.

They came to an agreement with Jacob and his sons that if the Hivites would be circumcised, then all would be well and peace would break out, *Gen 34:17 But if you will not be circumcised, we will take our daughter and depart. Gen 34:18 Their offer pleased Hemor, and Sichem, his son: Gen 34:19 And the young man made no delay, but forthwith fulfilled what was required: for he loved the damsel exceedingly, and he was the greatest man in all his father's house. Gen 34:20 And going into the gate of the city, they spoke to the people: Gen 34:21 These men are peaceable, and are willing to dwell with us: let them trade in the land, and till it, which being large and wide wanteth men to till it: we shall take their daughters for wives, and we will give them ours. Gen 34:22 One thing there is for which so great a good is deferred: We must circumcise every male among us, following the manner of the nation.* DRB.

The third day was a day of infamy. When the poor men were suffering the pain of the circumcision, they were at their weakest and were attacked, *Gen 34:25 And behold the third day, when the pain of the wound was greatest: two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, the brothers of Dina, taking their swords, entered boldly into the city and slew all the men. Gen 34:26 And they killed also Hemor and Sichem, and took away their sister Dina out of Sichem's house. Gen 34:27 And when they were gone out, the other sons of Jacob came upon the slain; and plundered the city in revenge of the rape.* DRB.

When Jacob found out, he was troubled by their cruelty, *Gen 34:30 And when they had boldly perpetrated these things, Jacob said to Simeon and Levi: You have troubled me, and made me hateful to the Chanaanites and Pherezites, the inhabitants of this land. We are few: they will gather themselves together and kill me; and both I, and my house shall be destroyed. Gen 34:31 They answered: Should they abuse our sister as a strumpet?* DRB. Joseph's brother's were not the nicest of men, and if the nation were to be like them, it would be a cruel people.

Another point to observe is that there were very few obligations on the son's of Jacob at this time. They were given the Covenant by God and didn't really have to do much themselves. In fact the covenants that were made in **Genesis** had no obligation upon men whatsoever, excepting the covenant of circumcision, *Gen 17:9 And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. Gen 17:10* ***This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee****; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. Gen 17:11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. Gen 17:12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. Gen 17:13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. Gen 17:14* ***And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant***.

In Genesis, the covenants are unilateral except the covenant of circumcision which is bilateral. That is, they all have the characteristic of, "I'm going to do it all from my side" which is unilateral, to "You do that and I'll do this", which is bilateral. But what are we to make of the words in Genesis Chapter 26, which appears to say that Abraham did the Law, *Gen 26:2 And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: Gen 26:3 Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father; Gen 26:4 And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; Gen*

26:5 ***Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws***.

There was no formal law giving to Abraham and the law was certainly not given as part of the covenant with Abraham. The commandments, statutes and laws must have been an extremely cut down version of Moses Laws, as we have seen, only a few laws existed in Genesis. What it is saying is that Abraham was faithful to what he knew of Elohim. The law which put in its simplest form was stated by Jesus, *Mat 22:36 Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Mat 22:37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. Mat 22:38 This is the first and great commandment. Mat 22:39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Mat 22:40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets*.

If Abraham loved Elohim and his neighbour, he had fulfilled the Law. Also by believing in Elohim, he was reckoned to have been faithful, *Gen 15:5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. Gen 15:6* ***And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness***. Just believing whatever Elohim said was enough. *Gal 3:10 Anyone who tries to please God by obeying the Law is under a curse. The Scriptures say, "Everyone who doesn't obey everything in the Law is under a curse." Gal 3:11 No one can please God by obeying the Law. The Scriptures also say, "The people God accepts because of their faith will live."* CEV.

This changes of course once we have completed the Exodus, when the covenant is bilateral, *Exo 24:1 And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off. Exo 24:2 And Moses alone shall come near the LORD: but they shall not come nigh; neither shall the people go up with him. Exo 24:3* ***And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do***. *Exo 24:4 And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. Exo 24:5 And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. Exo 24:6 And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Exo 24:7* ***And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient***. *Exo 24:8 And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words*.

The children of Jacob had no formal guidance as to their behaviour because there was no written word of God. It was no wonder that they behaved as they did,

with no sword hanging over them. They were the sons of the covenant, albeit for the most part, a unilateral covenant, so the onus was on Elohim to deliver the covenant. It was hard to show them and to bring home to their hearts, the sinfulness of their condition, in fact sin is not mentioned much in Genesis.

I think that the way Elohim got the sons of Jacob to see their sinfulness was by using similar events to those they had committed to trigger the guilt. The boot was so to speak, transferred to the other foot, and they were made to feel their crimes. Sometimes, a situational shift is all that is needed to bring a man into conviction, as when David was convicted of his sins by Nathan the prophet, *2Sa 12:1 And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. 2Sa 12:2 The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: 2Sa 12:3 But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. 2Sa 12:4 And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. 2Sa 12:5 And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: 2Sa 12:6 And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. 2Sa 12:7 And Nathan said to David,* ***Thou art the man****.*

The brothers are about to be brought to book, but it does not seem to be Joseph's idea. He is very troubled by his brothers presence, and it seems to me he has been told by Elohim to do as he is told no matter how much it seems unpleasant to him.

- *Gen 43:30 Right away he rushed off to his room and cried because of his love for Benjamin. Gen 43:31 After washing his face and returning, he was able to control himself and said, "Serve the meal!"*
- *Gen 45:1 Since Joseph could no longer control his feelings in front of his servants, he sent them out of the room. When he was alone with his brothers, he told them, "I am Joseph." Gen 45:2 Then he cried so loudly that the Egyptians heard him and told about it in the king's palace.*

Joseph was in turmoil over his brothers. Sometimes we are not the ones who have the strength or courage to discipline those we care for. We are too bound up in their lives, we are in a way compromised and unable to push home the matter of personal sins, we feel that if we say it they will take offence and not have anything more to do with us. We are fearing men rather than God and the result is we shall lose the fight against sin and they will go into the pit oblivious of wronging God, because we never told them.

God takes the matter out of Joseph's hands. Joseph was told by Elohim that it was all working for good for Joseph and I suspect that he understood what was being done by Elohim.

103. Joseph's God. Part 5

Preparatory reading: Genesis Chapter 1

The Lord is starting the process that will bring the family of Jacob together and to teach them that they must behave as the people of God, and not go about like a gang of bandits. Mizraim was the caldron God was going to use to boil them all together, or to use another analogy, an iron furnace, where they would face a greater trial, *Deu 4:20 But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day*. The purpose of the furnace is to get rid of the dross, *Job 23:10 But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold*.

The story of the brothers coming down into Mizraim is well known, and how Joseph eventually revealed himself to his brothers. It is a story which resonates with the life of *Jesus, Joh 7:3 His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. Joh 7:4 For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world*. *Joh 7:5* ***For neither did his brethren believe in him***.

I think that from this point in history, Joseph's portrayal of Jesus is more important and better understood. It also shows the relationship with the world, Mizraim, as it shifts and shapes its values, contrary to Jesus. It was a world where spirits played a dominant role, a malign role, *Eph 6:11 Put on all the armor that God gives, so you can defend yourself against the devil's tricks. Eph 6:12 We are not fighting against humans. We are fighting against forces and authorities and against rulers of darkness and powers in the spiritual world*. CEV. Joseph could see the coming battle, *Gen 50:24 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and* ***God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land*** *unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Gen 50:25 And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying,* ***God will surely visit you,*** *and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.*

We should not think that because there is a cosy relationship with the world, that Joseph is lulled into a compromise with Mizraim, or that his guard has come down. He could see quite clearly now, his role and place in the sovereign plan of Elohim, the God who sees the end from the beginning. The clash of cultures would lead to a very bloody end, but for now all was quiet and favourable to

Joseph for saving the people, the people of Mizraim, in order to save the Israelites.

They were two different people's, with two world views. They both looked out upon the same world and the universe, but they interpreted it differently, they had different eyes, which saw it in a different way. The eyes of Mizraim were not opened to the Creator Jehovah Jesus, and without Him to guide them they thrashed about in a sea of darkness. This is a brief look at the cosmological perspective of Mizraim, their world view.

> Where did we come from and how did our world begin? For thousands of years, people from cultures all around the globe have devised stories to explain the creation of their domains. The ancient Egyptians were no different in this regard. By examining their religious literature and accompanying representations, we can come away with an understanding of how they explained the creation of the world in which they lived. Their beliefs were complex and reflected their natural environment. In this essay for Glencairn Museum News, Dr. Jennifer Houser Wegner, Associate Curator in the Egyptian Section at the Penn Museum, introduces us to the fascinating subject of ancient Egyptian creation myths, including the cosmological context for several objects in Glencairn Museum's Egyptian gallery.
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> The Egyptian pantheon was filled with deities who inhabited the heavens but whose influence was experienced on earth. In the Pyramid Texts of the Old Kingdom, which first appeared on the interiors of the pyramids of the kings of the Fifth Dynasty of the Old Kingdom (c. 2500–2350 BC), we learn that the Egyptians regarded the sky as a dwelling place of their gods and a location connected to the afterlife. Just as their daily life depended upon the Nile River, the Egyptians envisioned this heavenly realm as a landscape that divine beings navigated in sacred boats.
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> The sun god, Re, was of paramount importance to the ancient Egyptians, and the sun's daily passage from east to west and its daily rising and setting served as a metaphor for the cycle of life—from birth, to adulthood, to death, to rebirth. The omnipresent sun in what was largely a desert environment may also explain the early Egyptians' interest in solar concepts. At dusk, the sun god proceeded into the underworld (the Duat). New Kingdom funerary texts (1292–1075 BC) and the associated images found on the walls of royal tombs record his night time journey. The sun god spent the twelve hours of the night travelling in the underworld, ultimately merging with Osiris, the primary funerary deity. The journey was treacherous, and the sun god faced his enemy, Apophis, a serpent who threatened him as he travelled in his solar boat nightly.

Another of Re's important roles was as a creator god. The sun's reappearance on the horizon at dawn each day was a symbol of the re-creation of the world. However, Re was not the sole creator god in Egyptian mythology. The Egyptians had several elaborate myths describing the origins of their world. Each of these creation stories was centred at a different city in ancient Egypt.

The Hermopolitan cosmology arose at the site of Hermopolis in Middle Egypt. Hermopolis was a city sacred to Thoth, the god of wisdom. The ancient Greeks equated Thoth with their god Hermes, which gives us the name Hermopolis, or "city of Hermes." The ancient Egyptian name for this city was Khemnu, or "Eight-Town." The number eight in this place-name makes references to the eight deities (the Ogdoad) who are the main characters in this version of the creation story. The Ogdoad consisted of four frog-headed male gods and their serpent-headed female counterparts. This divine group represented the dark, watery, unknown, and eternal state of the cosmos prior to creation. Nun and Naunet represented water. Heh and Hauhet expressed the notion of infinity. Kek and Kauket stood for darkness. Amun and Amaunet reflected the concept of hiddenness. These eight gods existed within the watery chaos of pre-creation.

Within this unchanging "nothingness," there was the potential for creation. The Egyptians believed that from these eight gods came a cosmic egg that contained the deity responsible for creating the rest of the world, including the primeval mound—the first land to arise out of the waters of pre-creation. In some versions of the myth, the egg was laid by a goose named "the Great Cackler," while in other versions an Ibis, the bird associated with the god Thoth, is responsible for the egg. Thoth's appearance here in the myth is probably the work of the Hermopolitan priesthood, who wanted to recognize the importance of the city's patron deity. After the mound appeared, a lotus blossom bloomed signalling the birth of the newborn sun god. After the sun made its first appearance, the rest of creation could follow. In some cases, this myth further describes a scarab beetle that emerges from the lotus. The scarab is often a solar symbol, and the texts describe how this beetle transforms into a child. When this child cried, his tears became humankind.

Another version of the creation of the cosmos can be found in a text known as the Memphite Theology. Memphis was one of the most important cities in ancient Egyptian history. Situated along the Nile at the point where the Nile River branches out into the Nile Delta, Memphis was Egypt's first capital city. Throughout Egypt's long history, Memphis remained an important religious and administrative centre even during times when its status as the country's capital city had shifted. According to the historian Manetho, Memphis was founded by

the legendary king Menes around 3200 BC. The divine triad who protected the city consisted of Ptah, his consort Sekhmet, and their child, Nefertem. Ptah was the patron deity of craftsmen, and in the Memphite version of creation he plays the role of the primary creator god.

> “He gave birth to the gods.
> He made the towns,
> He established the nomes, (each of the thirty- six territorial divisions of ancient Egypt)
> He placed the gods in their shrines,
> He settled their offerings,
> He established their shrines,
> He made their bodies according to their wishes.
> Thus the gods entered into their bodies,
> Of every wood, every stone, every clay,
> Everything that grows upon him
> In which they came to be.
> Thus were gathered to him all the gods and their kas,
> Content, united with the Lord of the Two Lands.”

Reference to the moment of creation is not only seen in Egyptian texts. Most temples have architectural features that mimic elements of the cosmos at the beginning of creation.

Each temple was a microcosm of the world wherein the creation was repeated on a daily basis. Beyond the entrance pylon, the typical temple contained one or more open courts, a hypostyle hall, and, at the innermost space, the sanctuary. The columns found throughout the temple often had capitals that are papyriform or lotiform in design, echoing the marshy plants that emerged on the primeval mound. The dark sanctuary or shrine that housed the image of the temple’s resident god imitated the mound upon which creation began. When priests carried out the morning rituals and opened the god’s shrine, they re-enacted the very moment of creation, and the temple’s resident deity took the position of the creator god. Many temple precincts are also bounded by walls whose bricks are laid in a wavy design, perhaps symbolizing the chaotic waters of pre-creation which are held at bay by the creation of the (primordial) mound upon which the temple structure was built.

In addition to the creator gods depicted in the main creation myths, there are other deities who were also considered creator gods such as Min, Amun, Khnum, and the Aten. One of Egypt’s earliest known deities was the god Min. Depictions of him appear as early as the Predynastic Period. Three colossal statues of Min dating to around 3300 BC were excavated by W.M.F. Petrie at the site of Coptos. These statues, while

fragmentary, originally depicted this god with the erect phallus that became standard for his representations. As a god connected with fertility and creation, Min is usually shown in this distinctive ithyphallic pose. He grasps a flail in one upraised arm and wears a tall plumed crown very similar to that of Amun-Re.

The Aten was a solar deity, and his role in creation is celebrated in hymns composed during this period. In one version, the Aten is praised and described as follows. (It is interesting to note that scholars have long observed the similarity of this hymn to the phraseology of Psalm 104 in the Bible):

> "How numerous are your works, though hidden from sight.
> Unique god, there is none beside him.
> You mould the earth to your wish, you and you alone.
> All people, herds and flocks,
> All on earth that walk on legs,
> All on high that fly with their wings.
> And on the foreign lands of Khar and Kush, the land of Egypt
> You place every man in his place,
> you make what they need,
> so that everyone has his food,
> his lifespan counted."

This religious experiment did not last long beyond the death of Akhenaten. By the beginning years of the reign of Tutankhamun, the traditional religious system with its many gods had been restored and the Aten returned to being just one of many solar deities in the Egyptian pantheon. As we can see, there was no one single creation story in Egyptian religious tradition. There were several different ways in which the Egyptians explained the origin of the world. These various traditions were not mutually exclusive. They often complimented and intersected each other, yet distinctions can be drawn amongst the various creation myths, which helps to distinguish one from the other.

We see that the world view of the Israelites was vastly different from the people of Mizraim. For the Israelites, Elohim broke through into their world but for the people of Mizriam He did not and they were searching for something that eluded them. The riddle of the universe would remain a riddle to the unbeliever and he would philosophise about its origin, for surely this universe came from something, and that something was intelligent or else it was just a horror of complete meaningless darkness.

Sin had made the world a miserable place with war, famine, disease and inevitably death, increasing the longing for a better place. Man's place in the

cosmos was infinitesimally small, in fact the Psalmist marvelled, *Psa 8:3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; Psa 8:4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? Psa 8:5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Psa 8:6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: Psa 8:7 All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; Psa 8:8 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. Psa 8:9 O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth*!

To make sense of anything, for anything to have a meaning, the ancients saw the necessity of a creation. Perhaps this came from their respective tales told down the generations and garbled in the mist of time. Even today the so called scientific world has a creation myth based on the false premise of a big bang. But it was to the Israelites that Jehovah Elohim explained his creation and through them, His glory would spread throughout the earth.

104. Joseph's God. Part 6

Preparatory reading: 1 Corinthians Chapter 2

We do not spend much time considering the society in which Joseph lived. His life and times are generally thought of as like ours, a bit more primitive, but his thoughts were not far off ours and the people had similar beliefs to us, so if today, we dressed the ancient people up in 21st century clothing, they would look and think like us and we wouldn't be far off the mark. But their world views were not those that we Christians entertain.

The people of Mizraim looked at the world around them and tried to make sense of it. We all like some sense of certainty in what we see, that the sun will come up tomorrow, that the seed time and harvest will come and go in regularity, that we will live to a specified age without infirmity, that nothing untoward will happen to the places in which we live. We like the certainty that a cyclic world will give to us, but why should the universe give us any certainty about anything?

We start to look at the reasons why things occur as they do, the beginnings of empirical science, finding out by observation. If such and such a thing happens with regularity, it becomes a rule and we have confidence in our observations. But why should we have that confidence? Well, by observing our own actions and the effects which they have. There is nothing that we do that does not have a regular effect, like for example, we plant a seed and it has an effect of growing into a plant. If we do not plant the seed it will not grow. But what causes my

action in planting the seed to “miraculously” germinate? What further processes are involved inside the seed itself and what moved them into action?

What moved the first thing and where did that come from? What is the first cause of all things? We come from a conscious intelligence, our parents, so what happened in the beginning? We think about it and presume that could only come about if there were forces that were governed by an Almighty power, to produce the stability we see. We reason this from our experience with “cause and effect”. According to the universal law of cause and effect there is nothing that happens by random chance, nothing whatsoever. All output or actions have consequences and these consequences are either good or bad and may cause positive or negative influence or effect on yourself or others, hence the saying we reap what we sow.

The law of cause and effect suggests that there must be an initial, uncaused cause of the universe. This first cause is God, who existed before all other causes. Some would say that a “big bang” started things moving, and it is as equally valid as the “God hypothesis”. After all we are here and something must have caused us and in the absence of clear evidence, we go beyond what we know and start fabricating a cosmology from our minds.

Now there are two things which we must take into account when developing our cosmology or world view. The first thing is **sin** which infects man and distorts any thoughts which he has of this world. *1Co 2:14 But the sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God. For it is foolishness to him: and he cannot understand, because it is spiritually examined..... 1Co 3:19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written: I will catch the wise in their own craftiness*. DRB. The Bible says that man will be an unreliable source of truth because he cannot understand the works of God.

The second important thing is that there is a personal **devil**, called the father of a lie, and his aim is to disrupt man’s relationship with his Creator by sowing lies and false understanding among men. The human brain is a remarkable thing, but you can be mislead in your processing of events, to see things that are not there, to do things unconsciously, to think that things are alright when they are not, and the devil will deceive us in whatever way he can.

The fact that man cannot reason correctly is critically important because it explains the world view he develops. There is a fundamental assumption that our thinking is unaffected by any flaws in our nature. Yet the Bible tells us, *ICo 2:14But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*. Until a man comes to Christ and receives forgiveness of his sin and a new birth, he will be stuck in a dark world of foolish wisdom. Just so, God views the thinking of the natural man as foolish, *ICo 3:19For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written. Fie taketh the wise in their own craftiness.* The natural man will not accept the scripture, the word of God, because he is at

enmity with his Creator. All that we speak of here will be regarded as the ramblings of the fool and the lunatic by the unbeliever. But then, the Bible was never given to the unbeliever, it was God's word to His people and it always will be.

When the people of Mizraim looked for their creator, the elusive “god” did not present himself to their minds, and so through a process of false reason they worshiped just about everything to make sure they were inclusive. The Egyptian pantheon included over 2,000 gods and goddesses. Some of the ones you may have heard of are,

- Amun – A creator god, patron deity of the city of Thebes, and the preeminent deity in ancient Egypt during the New Kingdom
- Anubis – The god of funerals, embalming and protector of the dead
- Aten – Sun disk deity who became the focus of the monolatrous or monotheistic Atenist belief system in the reign of Akhenaten. Was also the literal sun disk
- Hapi – Personification of the Nile flood
- Horus – A major god, usually shown as a falcon or as a human child, linked with the sky, the sun, kingship, protection, and healing. Often said to be the son of Osiris and Isis
- Khepri – A solar creator god, often treated as the morning aspect of Ra and represented by a scarab beetle
- Khonsu – A moon god, son of Amun and Mut
- Nefertum – God of the lotus blossom from which the sun god rose at the beginning of time. Son of Ptah and Sekhmet
- Osiris – god of death and resurrection who rules the Underworld and enlivens vegetation, the sun god, and deceased souls
- Set – An ambivalent god, characterized by violence, chaos, and strength, connected with the desert. Mythological murderer of Osiris and enemy of Horus, but also a supporter of the Pharaoh
- Sobek – crocodile god, worshiped in the Faiyum and at Kom Ombo
- Thoth – A moon god, and a god of writing and scribes, and patron deity of Hermopolis

The difference between Joseph’s God, the God of the Hebrews, and those god’s of Mizraim, was that He, Elohim, had revealed Himself to the Hebrews but the people of Mizraim could not receive this, *Rom 1:19 Because what is known of God is manifest among them, for God has manifested it to them, Rom 1:20 —for from the world's creation the invisible things of him are perceived, being apprehended by the mind through the things that are made, both his eternal power and divinity, —so as to render them inexcusable. Rom 1:21 Because, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but fell into folly in their thoughts, and their heart without understanding was darkened*: Darby.

Mizraim lacks the ability to discern the things of God, as we have said, because of sin, and like the parables of Jesus, they just will not register them, *Mat 13:13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. Mat 13:14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: Mat 13:15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Mat 13:16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear*.

Without the input of Elohim in their lives, they invent a fairy tale. This article by Michael J. Disney (a good name for a maker of fairy tales), Modern Cosmology: Science or Folktale? suggests that we are still inventing “gods”,

> The currently fashionable concordance model of cosmology (also known to the cognoscenti as "Lambda-Cold Dark Matter," or lambda-CDM) has 18 parameters, 17 of which are independent. Thirteen of these parameters are well fitted to the observational data; the other four remain floating. This situation is very far from healthy. **Any theory with more free parameters[1] than relevant observations has little to recommend it.** Cosmology has always had such a *negative significance,* in the sense that it has always had fewer observations than free parameters, though cosmologists are strangely reluctant to admit it. **While it is true that we presently have no alternative to the Big Bang in sight, that is no reason to accept it. Thus it was that witchcraft took hold**.

The historian of science Daniel Boorstin once remarked: "The great obstacle to discovering the shape of the Earth, the continents and the oceans **was not ignorance but <u>the illusion of knowledge</u>.** Imagination drew in bold strokes, instantly serving hopes and fears, while knowledge advanced by slow increments and contradictory witnesses." The cosmology that we have today has a pantheon of gods the same as the people of Mizraim had. Instead of the idea of Anubis and Horus, etc, for example, the modern man has the idea of a “cosmological constant”, a fudge factor that Albert Einstein introduced in 1915 to balance calculations in his theory of general relativity, an invention created as the god of maths, new ideas in old clothing.

The Hebrews God was **<u>NOT</u>** the same as the gods of Mizraim although the gods of Mizraim are the same as the gods of today. One of the outstanding things about the Hebrew God, Elohim is that He is one God, *Deu 6:4 Hear, Israel: **Jehovah our Elohim is one Jehovah***; God reveals Himself in the Name by the

[1] A free parameter is a variable in a mathematical model that cannot be precisely predicted or constrained by the model. Free parameters must be estimated experimentally or theoretically.

things He does but He is still one Jehovah. He may perchance, as the circumstances dictate, reveal Himself as El Shaddai, Jehovah, Adonai, El Elyon and many other names, but it is the same God displaying different aspects of His character

The simplicity of the Hebrews God is apparent, He has many names yet He is one. He is not like the pantheon that you saw in Mizraim, 2,000+ gods you had to remember. Joseph had an entirely different set of beliefs to the people of Mizraim, and this was no small matter. It was alright while they were struggling for a solution to a common problem, the famine, but once that had been solved the difference in belief would surface again.

The people of Mizraim were polytheistic, and the Israelites were monotheistic. The people of Mizraim's gods had human traits and could die, whereas God was fully God and could not die. To get to heaven, the people of Mizraim believed they needed to do good works, but the Israelites believed they needed faith. With this fundamental difference, they were set on a collision course that would lead to a clash of the "Gods".

You could live in Mizraim as long as you followed its rules and customs. It would attempt to assimilate you into its belief system, but the Hebrews were always the outsiders, and in the providence of God dwelt in Goshen. Not only did living in the land of Goshen set the Hebrews apart from the Mizraimites but it also kept them close to Joseph their saviour, *Gen 45:10 You will live near me in the region of Goshen with your children and grandchildren, as well as with your sheep, goats, cattle, and everything else you own.* Goshen was close to the centre of Egyptian government. When Moses was taken from the water he was found near Pharaoh's palace adding credence to this. Goshen was also called Rameses, *Gen 47:11 And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded.* Goshen/Rameses was also a store city, *Exo 1:11 And they set over them service-masters to oppress them with their burdens. And they built store-cities for Pharaoh, Pithom and Rameses*.

Goshen is mentioned in Joshua as a city of Israel, *Jos 11:16 And Joshua took all that land, the mountain and all the south, and all the land of Goshen, and the lowland, and the plain, and the mountain of Israel, and its lowland;* So this city must have been on the border of Israel and Mizraim.

Mizraim is remembered in Revelation as the place where Jesus died, *Rev 11:8 Their bodies will be left lying in the streets of the same great city where their*

Lord was nailed to a cross. And that city is spiritually like the city of Sodom or the country of Egypt. CEV.

Mizraim may seem to be nice, but when push comes to shove, it will do what is necessary to suppress the faith, imprison and kill any faith that opposes it. Joseph had brought his people into the furnace to make them see the difference between serving Mizraim and Elohim.

105. Joseph's God. Part 7

Preparatory reading: Genesis Chapter 45

Gen 45:4 And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Gen 45:5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. Gen 45:6 For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. Gen 45:7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. Gen 45:8 So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

Today we examine the priesthood of Mizraim, and it is important because that ancient institution has many resemblances to the churches of today, the society in which we live and the elite institutions that we have made. The details are given to show the invented complexity men make to establish their world view, which it turns out, is nothing but a house built upon sand.

The ancient Egyptian religion was centred on the pharaoh and the gods. The Egyptians believed that the gods controlled the universe and could cause famine, death, or make the Nile overflow. They also believed in the afterlife and made great efforts to ensure the survival of their souls. There was also a hierarchy of religion in Mizraim with Pharaoh as the first of the holy. He appointed the leaders of the great sanctuaries, for he needed to control this powerful clergy, veritable dynasties in which the priests inherit the office from father to son. This clergy is highly hierarchical; priests are appointed by their peers and senior officials. The religion was a complex system of polytheistic beliefs and rituals that formed an integral part of ancient Egyptian culture. It centred on the Egyptians' interactions with many deities believed to be present and in control of the world. About 2,000 deities are known.

This article, "Clergy, Priests & Priestesses in Ancient Egypt", by Joshua J. Mark sets out how they functioned.

The ancient Egyptians understood that their gods had prevailed over the forces of chaos through the creation of the world and relied upon humanity's help to maintain it. The people of Mesopotamia held this same belief but felt they were co-workers with the gods, labouring daily to hold back chaos through even the simplest acts, but the Egyptians believed all they had to do was recognize how the world worked, who was responsible for its operation, and behave accordingly.

This behaviour was directed by the central cultural value, ma'at (harmony and balance) which was sustained by an underlying force known as heka (magic). Heka (personified as the god Heka) had been present at the creation of the world, pre-existing the gods, and allowed those gods to perform their duties. All the people, by observing ma'at, helped to maintain the order established by the gods through Heka, but a special class was responsible for honouring and caring for the gods daily, and this was the priesthood.

The clergy of ancient Egypt did not preach, interpret scripture, proselytize, or conduct weekly services; their sole responsibility was to care for the god in the temple. Men and women could be clergy, performed the same functions, and received the same pay. Women were more often priestesses of female deities while men served males, but this was not always the case as evidenced by the priests of the goddess Serket (Selket), who were doctors and both female and male, and those of the god Amun. The position of God's Wife of Amun, held by a woman, would eventually become as powerful as that of the king.

High priests were chosen by the king, who was considered the high priest of Egypt, the mediator between the people and their gods, and so this position had political as well as religious authority. The priesthood was already established in the Early Dynastic Period in Egypt (c. 3150-2613 BC) but developed in the Old Kingdom (c. 2613-2181 BC) at the same time as the great mortuary complexes like Giza and Saqqara were being constructed. Throughout Egypt's history, the priesthood would serve a vital role in maintaining religious belief and tradition while, at the same time, consistently challenge the authority of the king by amassing wealth and power which at times rivalled that of the crown.

Male priests were known as hem-netjer and females as hemet-netjer (servants of the god). There was a hierarchy in the priesthood from the high priest (hem-netjer-tepi, 'first servant of god') at the top to the wab priests at the bottom. The wab priests carried out the essential but fairly mundane tasks of taking care of the temple complex and performing whatever function they were called upon for, such as helping to prepare for festivals.

In between these two positions was a wide array of priests who performed all kinds of duties in service to the gods: kitchen staff, janitors, porters, scribes, anyone who worked in the temple complex who had any association with the god was in some form a priest. Even the cult singers and musicians needed to have had some training in the priesthood to perform their duties, though probably not the kind of initiation or education which actual priests went through.

The hour-priests were astronomers who kept the calendar, determined lucky and unlucky days, interpreted omens and dreams. There were the doctors, who were also priests, the swnw (general practitioner) and the sau (magical practitioner) who both combined medicine and magic. A ka-priest (also known as a ka-servant) was paid by a family to perform the daily offerings at the tomb of the deceased.

The ka was the vital force that differentiated a living person from a dead one. It came into existence at birth and was sometimes depicted as a smaller figure next to the living person. After death, the ka was believed to roam the earth, but needed a physical body or surrogate to return to as a permanent home. Ka statues were often set up as memorials for the deceased. Priests would perform a special ritual called the opening of the mouth ceremony to bring the statues to life.

There were also sem priests who presided over mortuary rituals and conducted funeral services. Sem priests were the embalmers who mummified the corpse and recited the incantations while wrapping the mummy. The sem priests were highly respected because they were responsible for the precise utterance of the spells which would guarantee eternal life to the deceased. An interesting exception was the sem priest who would make the actual incision in the body to remove the organs. After this procedure, he was ritually insulted by his peers and chased down the road, most likely to ward off evil spirits associated with causing injury to the body.

Just below the high priest was the lector priest (hery-heb or cheriheb) who wrote down the religious texts, instructed other clergy, and recited the "authoritative utterance," the heka, in the temple and at festivals. Although there is evidence of women serving in all other positions in temple life, there is no record of a female lector priest. This could have been because the position was usually passed from father to son.

There were as many duties and rituals as there were priests, but the high-ranking clergy participated daily in two which were considered of utmost importance: Lighting the Fire and Drawing the Bolt. In the fire ritual, the priests would gather before dawn in a sacred room close to the god's shrine and re-enact the first appearance of the sun by lighting a fire in a brazier. The boat of the sun god was thought to pass

through the underworld at night where it was threatened by the serpent Apophis. Rituals were often observed to help the sun god navigate his nightly trip safely and defeat Apophis and lighting the morning fire was among these.

Following Lighting the Fire came Drawing the Bolt which was when the door was unlocked to the shrine room where the statue of the god resided. Only the high priest could enter this inner sanctum because it was believed the god or goddess lived in the statue and one was entering sacred space. The high priest was considered sanctified enough to share the presence of the god but no one else until the New Kingdom when the office of God's Wife of Amun was elevated under Ahmose I (c. 1570-1544 BC). The God's Wife of Amun became the female counterpart of the high priest and some of the God's Wives had previously been high priestesses. The priest would wash and dress the statue, and then those of lesser rank would provide food and drink which was brought to the god and left in the room. When it was thought the god had supernaturally absorbed these offerings, they were removed from the room and dispensed to the temple staff.

For the most part, the people of Egypt interacted with their gods privately or during the many festivals held throughout the year. The priests served the gods, not the people. None of these rituals involved a weekly service where the people would come to worship the god and hear the priest or priestess speak. The people already understood how the world worked and what was expected of them and did not need any ecclesiastical authority to instruct them. There is evidence that people came to the temple for help with medical, financial, and emotional needs as well as to request protection against evil spirits or ghosts, and it is also clear they would bring offerings to the temple in gratitude for prayers answered. For the most part, however, the people of Egypt interacted with their gods privately or during the many festivals held throughout the year. **The priests served the gods, not the people**.

Whether you look upon the priesthood as a racket or genuinely held convictions, it kept the nation of Mizraim together. There must be those who can bamboozle the simple minds and take leadership of them and the priests certainly did this. Such entitlement marked them as superior to the populous. It still happens, and I was reading about the “entitled ones” in the paper today. “Furious Americans have slammed Hollywood's 'out of touch and snobby' liberal elite, after Alec Baldwin and Sharon Stone branded millions 'uneducated' for voting in Donald Trump. The criticism comes after Baldwin, 66, claimed that Americans were 'uninformed' while appearing at the 42nd Torino Film Festival in Turin, Italy on Monday, where he also stated that Americans 'know little or nothing' about world issues during a press conference”. The overblown sense of self worth however does not stand up to any scrutiny.

Some people bow to their opinions others just ignore them. Richard Feynman, although a Nobel Prize winner in physics, explains his distaste for “honours,” a distaste I have always shared, not just because honours often go to the wrong people, but also because they are generally a divisive instrument, singling out the “illustrious” by virtue of arbitrary categories and principles of selection, often for purposes of political and/or commercial advantage.

> One of the things that my father taught me besides physics, whether it’s correct or not, was a disrespect…for certain kinds of things. For example, when I was a little boy…he used to sit me again on his knee and he’d open…a picture of the Pope and everybody bowing in front of him. And he’d say, ‘Now look at these humans. Here is one human standing here, and all these others are bowing. Now what is the difference? This one is the Pope’ — he hated the Pope anyway — and he’d say, ‘the difference is epaulets’ — of course not in the case of the Pope, but if he was a general — it was always the uniform, the position, ‘but this man has the same human problems, he eats dinner like anybody else, he goes to the bathroom, he has the same kind of problems as everybody, he’s a human being. Why are they all bowing to him? Only because of his name and his position, because of his uniform, not because of something special he did, or his honor, or something like that.’ He, by the way, was in the uniform business, so he knew what the difference was between the man with the uniform off and the uniform on; it’s the same man for him…

The “gods” are sustained by their “experts”, priests, and they will all fade into nothing if the priests are taken away, because the gods do not really exist. It is like a pyramid scam, a fraudulent business model that relies on recruiting new members to make money, rather than selling products. I remember, in the days of main frame computers, that it felt like you were entering the realm of the mystics, a priesthood, when you took the offering of your computer programme for them to run. It is the same in the churches. They have no basis of truth upon which their “sand castle” of religious service exists. They go through the motions of “serving” a deity, but you a mere peasant cannot serve the deity in the same way because you are not qualified. They go before an altar and mutter and peep and genuflect, to please their god, but where did God say that He wanted this?

We have some people dress differently because they think it gives them respect, or status that you do not have. Whatever happened to the little children, *Luk 18:16 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Luk 18:17 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein*. You don’t need men to lead you, you need a simple child

The men that are looked up to as leaders of religion, be it in ancient Mizraim, or today's denominational church, or even in the mystic science that have the same aim of bringing the people of God into bondage, but they are nothing without your support, and they are so rendered unemployable. They only exist because a superstitious people supports their existence.

So why do so many people follow them? Fear, fear of men and of being different, but more than that, as we said, the devil is a deceiver, and he will persuade men against God Almighty. To do this he has recruited an army of false teachers, *2Pe 2:1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as* ***there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction****. 2Pe 2:2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. 2Pe 2:3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not*.

There are of course good teachers, but you do not have to rely upon them, for the Scripture says, *1Jn 2:27 But Christ has blessed you with the Holy Spirit. Now the Spirit stays in you, and you don't need any teachers.* ***The Spirit is truthful and teaches you everything. So stay one in your heart with Christ, just as the Spirit has taught you to do.*** CEV. Christ alone, as the Reformers said, **solo Christo.**

106. Mizraim to Babylon

Preparatory reading: Isaiah Chapter 10

Joseph married Potipherah's a priests's daughter and had two sons, Ephraim and Mannaseh, *Gen 41:45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnathpaaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.* We should not think that this was an unequal yoke, because she may well have embraced Elohim, because Joseph was faithful to Elohim.

Mizraim has spawned another great type of the Saviour Jesus, Joseph, who set in place Elohim's plan by bringing the Hebrews into Mizraim, and delivering Israel from the iron furnace. Mizraim/Egypt has served as a refuge and an oppressor to bring out a great nation. Babylon would do the same. Babylon was a part of the great nation that dwelt in the fertile crescent of Mesopotamia. There was Assyria in the north of the crescent and Babylon in the south, both nations had a Semitic origin and both spoke dialects of the Akkadian language. The Babylonians are also called Chaldeans.

The Assyrian was just like the Egyptian, he was an oppressor, but the Lord would deliver them from that nation also, *Isa 10:23 For the Lord GOD of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of all the land. Isa 10:24 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD of hosts, O my people that dwellest in Zion,* ***be not afraid of the Assyrian: he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt****. Isa 10:25 For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger in their destruction*.

Now we might suppose that the people of Egypt and the people of Assyria were beyond redemption but we would be mistaken, *Isa 19:18 In that day shall there be five cities in the land of Egypt speaking the language of Canaan, and swearing by Jehovah of hosts: one shall be called, The city of Heres. Isa 19:19 In that day shall there be an altar to Jehovah in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to Jehovah: Isa 19:20 and it shall be for a sign and for a witness to Jehovah of hosts in the land of Egypt; for they shall cry unto Jehovah because of the oppressors, and he will send them a saviour and defender, who shall deliver them. Isa 19:21* ***And Jehovah shall be known to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians shall know Jehovah in that day****, and shall serve with sacrifice and oblation; and they shall vow a vow unto Jehovah, and perform it. Isa 19:22* ***And Jehovah will smite Egypt; he will smite and heal: and they shall return to Jehovah****, and he will be entreated of them, and will heal them. Isa 19:23* ***In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria; and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria; and Egypt shall serve with Assyria.*** *Isa 19:24 In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth; Isa 19:25 whom Jehovah of hosts will bless, saying,* ***Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance****!* Darby.

So the “bad boys” will become part of God’s kingdom. I think that this is quite significant and we shall have to delve into the prophetic books further to see what is happening. Suffice to say, however evil a nation, they can be rescued, and we should not think that in this evil world there is any nation that is beyond the pale. Even the tribes of Canaan which were scheduled for destruction are capable of redemption, *Deu 7:1 When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; Deu 7:2 And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: Deu 7:3 Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. Deu 7:4 For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly*.

Now you might think the "*the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites"* were thrown out of the land because the Israelites were good and righteous, and were deserving of the Promised Land, but the fact is they weren't, *Deu 9:4 Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee. Deu 9:5* ***Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers****, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Deu 9:6 Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people*.

By the way, the judgement on these Canaanites was only to take place in the Promised Land, and they could go on living their wicked lives outside of the land. The Israelites were not told to pursue them relentlessly. And as I said, God's mercy is ever present and Rahab and Urijah the Hittite, Canaanites, became part of Israel, and Jesus healed a Syrophoenician woman's daughter, a Canaanite. The genocide committed on these nations was the just judicial sentence for their wickedness, which God said to Abraham, *Gen 15:15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. Gen 15:16 But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again:* ***for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full***. In time the Israelites would go the same way and be led into captivity for their sins.

Christians are very hard on the sins of others it seems to me. We "get saved" and then we turn upon that world from which we were rescued and avoid contact with them because we are self righteous hypocrites. We do not look at ways to save the world but to ways in which we can condemn them, batter them into the ground and annihilate them. All of this I suggest comes from a hard heart, not a tender heart of compassion, not from the spirit of Christ. We should speak to them and correct them, as Ken Ham suggests,

> Here's a practical example of what I mean by addressing the social issues of today from a foundational perspective. Recently it was "Transgender Day of Visibility," and here are some of the headlines that ran on, or around that day. Transgender Assistant Secretary of Health Rachel Levine says changing kids' genders has the "highest support" of the Biden administration and is key to the mental health of minors, Biden calls bans on transgender treatments for children "close to sinful".
>
> Dr. Rachel Levine says changing kids' genders will soon be fully embraced: "Wheels will turn on this". Who is this Dr. Rachel Levine? Well, **he's** the Assistant Secretary of Health in the US, and in March

> 2022 **he** was named 1 of 12 “Women of the Year” by USA Today. **But he is not a woman! He’s a man who fathered 2 children, claims he’s now a woman, and is one of the people in charge of health in America**.
>
> And this tweet came from President Joe Biden, 'On Transgender Day of Visibility, we want you to know that we see you just as you are: Made in the image of God and deserving of dignity, respect, and support. We'll never stop working to create a world where you won't have to be brave just to be yourself.'
>
> What a mess. Dr. Levine, along with President Biden, is an ardent supporter of children, youth, and adults trying to change their gender using dangerous drugs and mutilating surgery. This is not surprising given Levine is a trans “woman” (whose sex chromosome pair is XY—so he’s still a man; science confirms there’s only two genders/sexes!).
>
> How do we deal with this issue? Well, let’s judge what the President and Dr. Levine (as stated in the video) believe and support against the foundation of God’s Word. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27) Male and female he created them....(Genesis 5:2) But from the beginning of creation, “God made them male and female.” (Mark 10:6) He [Jesus] answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female.” (Matthew 19:4)
>
> Scripture (and science!) makes it clear there are only two genders of humans. So, starting from the foundation of God’s Word, we reject the idea that men can be women and women can be men. We understand, of course, that we live in a fallen world and some people will struggle with their identity as a male or a female, so we want to help them, compassionately and lovingly. But lying to them is not loving. What’s loving is to share with them the truth of God’s Word and the gospel message!

I think that so called “Christians” are the worst enemies of Christianity, they do such a bad job of representing Jesus, as Mahatma Ghandi observed,

> "I like your Christ, but not your Christianity." "I believe in the teachings of Christ, but you on the other side of the world do not, I read the Bible faithfully and see little in Christendom that those who profess faith pretend to see."The Christians above all others are seeking after wealth. Their aim is to be rich at the expense of their neighbours. They come among aliens to exploit them for their own good and cheat them to do so. Their prosperity is far more essential to them than the life,

liberty, and happiness of others. "The Christians are the most warlike people.

That is just one way we do not serve the Lord. We arrogate roles to ourselves that Christianity knows nothing about, and we strut around in clothes and collars, and give ourselves titles, that never ever originated from Jesus. We somehow think that God does not know how to run His church, and that we can do a better job than He can, and like the men who rented the vineyard, we seize it from Him and kill His son, *Mat 21:33 Jesus told the chief priests and leaders to listen to this story: A land owner once planted a vineyard. He built a wall around it and dug a pit to crush the grapes in. He also built a lookout tower. Then he rented out his vineyard and left the country. Mat 21:34 When it was harvest time, the owner sent some servants to get his share of the grapes. Mat 21:35 But the renters grabbed those servants. They beat up one, killed one, and stoned one of them to death. Mat 21:36 He then sent more servants than he did the first time. But the renters treated them in the same way. Mat 21:37 inally, the owner sent his own son to the renters, because he thought they would respect him. Mat 21:38 But when they saw the man's son, they said, "Someday he will own the vineyard. Let's kill him! Then we can have it all for ourselves." Mat 21:39 So they grabbed him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Mat 21:40 Jesus asked, "When the owner of that vineyard comes, what do you suppose he will do to those renters?"* CEV.

Whatever happened to that child like trust, that is an example to all men, *Mat 18:3 Then he said: I promise you this. If you don't change and become like a child, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven. Mat 18:4* ***But if you are as humble as this child, you are the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*** CEV. Or what about the attitude of serving and not lording, *Mar 10:42 But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. Mar 10:43* ***But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: Mar 10:44 And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.*** *Mar 10:45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many*.

No, we are just like the seven tribes, tribes that were thrust out of the land "*the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites"*, like Israel that was thrown into captivity, and like all the nations that were cast out as unprofitable, all sold under sin, Egypt and Babylon, and it is by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that we have anything to peg our hope upon.

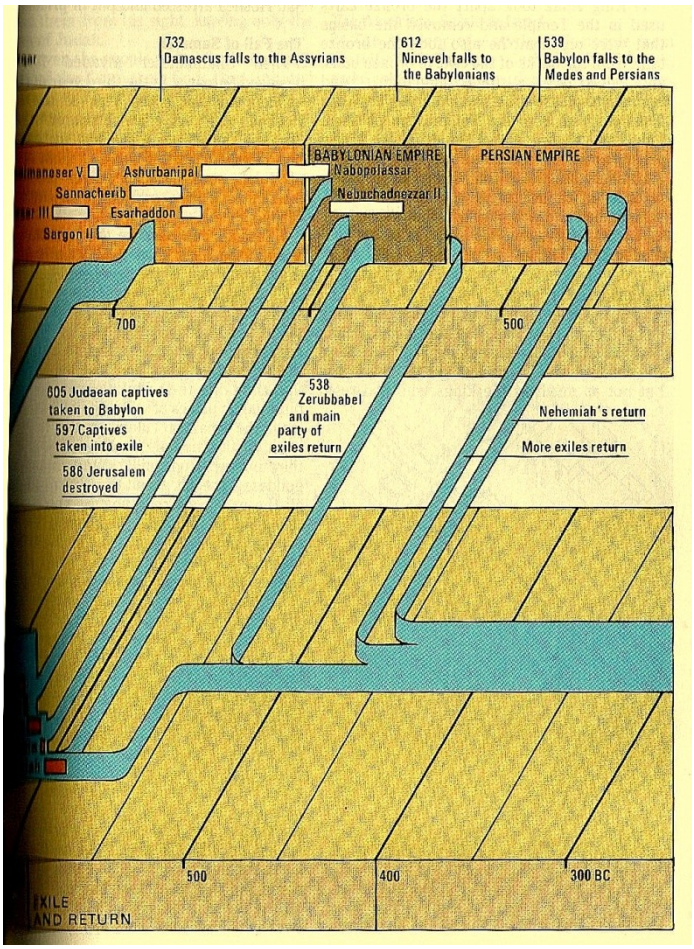
We can view Mizraim as a hard taskmaster, a false religion, a wanton killer, but they played their part in shaping Israel. We shall see in the next Chapter how Babylon does the same thing as Egypt did, and all these things were done for our benefit, *1Co 10:11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and*

they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. 1Co 10:12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. And we listen like the disciples, *Luk 24:11 And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and* ***they believed them not***. We don't see for a moment that the Scripture is talking about us.

107. Daniel Goes to Babylon

Preparatory reading: Daniel Chapter 1

Daniel, like Joseph, is a victim of circumstance, which in God's providence, leads him to be a figure like Jesus in the fight with the powers of this world, this time in Babylon, *Dan 1:1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. Dan 1:2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god*.



We sometimes mistakenly think that the Babylonian captivity happened as one event, when the Jews were all taken away and the Temple destroyed, in one event. This is not true because there were three Captivities.

Jehoiakim, also called Eliakim, was put into power by Pharaoh Neco of Egypt, who had killed his brother. Babylon attacked Judah and Jehoiakim surrendered to Babylon for three years, but he rebelled and Judah suffered its first devastating blow by Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar took away many in the ruling class. This is the wave that took Daniel into captivity, *2Ki 23:34 And Pharaohnechoh made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the room of Josiah his father, and turned his name to Jehoiakim, and took Jehoahaz away: and he came to Egypt, and died there. 2Ki 23:35 And Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh: he exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, of every one according to his taxation, to give it unto Pharaohnechoh. 2Ki 23:36 Jehoiakim was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Zebudah, the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah. 2Ki*

23:37 And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done. 2Ki 24:1 In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and rebelled against him. 2Ki 24:2 And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets. 2Ki 24:3 Surely at the commandment of the LORD came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did; 2Ki 24:4 And also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; which the LORD would not pardon. 2Ki 24:5 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 2Ki 24:6 So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead.

Jehoiachin, also called Coniah or Jeconiah, only managed to reign three months under Babylon. He was carted away in the second attack by Nebuchadnezzar along with the middle class, craftsmen, and the remainder of the upper class. In this attack, the treasures of Israel were carted off to Babylon. This was the wave that took Ezekiel into captivity (II Kings 24:6-16). *2Ki 24:6 So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead. 2Ki 24:7 And the king of Egypt came not again any more out of his land: for the king of Babylon had taken from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt. 2Ki 24:8 Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. And his mother's name was Nehushta, the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. 2Ki 24:9 And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done. 2Ki 24:10 At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. 2Ki 24:11 And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it. 2Ki 24:12 And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign*.

Zedekiah, also called Mattaniah, managed to reign eleven years before rebelling and the third wave destroyed what was left of Judah. Most of Jeremiah deals with Zedekiah's reign. *2Ki 25:1 And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it; and they built forts against it round about. 2Ki 25:2 And the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. 2Ki 25:3 And on the ninth day of the fourth month the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land. 2Ki 25:4 And the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between two walls, which is by the king's garden: (now the Chaldees were against the city round about:) and the king went the way toward the plain. 2Ki 25:5 And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered*

from him. 2Ki 25:6 So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him. 2Ki 25:7 And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon. 2Ki 25:8 And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem: 2Ki 25:9 And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire.

There are then three separate deportations which occurred over 20 years,

1. First deportation: Around 606 BC
2. Second deportation: 597 BC
3. Third deportation: 586 BC, when Jerusalem was destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon

We should not view the captivity in isolation from the downgrade actions of the kings of Judah or from the prophets whom God sent to dissuade them from that abyss of destruction into which the people were going. The prophets had taken over from the priests because they were not reliable, Mal 2:1 I, the LORD All-Powerful, have something else to say to you priests*, Mal 2:2 You had better take seriously the need to honor my name. Otherwise, when you give a blessing, I will turn it into a curse. In fact, I have already done this, because you haven't taken to heart your duties as priests. Mal 2:3 I will punish your descendants and rub your faces in the manure from your animal sacrifices, and then be done with you. Mal 2:4 I am telling you this, so I can continue to keep my agreement with your ancestor Levi. Mal 2:5 I blessed him with a full life, as I had promised, and he kept his part of the agreement by honoring me and respecting my name. Mal 2:6 He taught the truth and never told lies, and he led a lot of people to turn from sin, because he obeyed me and lived right. Mal 2:7 You priests should be eager to spread knowledge, and everyone should come to you for instruction, because you speak for me, the LORD All-Powerful. Mal 2:8 But you have turned your backs on me. Your teachings have led others to do sinful things, and you have broken the agreement I made with your ancestor Levi*.

The prophets were not heeded. The Old Testament prophets were holy men who were persecuted by kings and ostracized by religious elders. If truth be told, their contemporaries had no use for them. And it is not an exaggeration to say that they were called by God to embrace a thankless task, *2Ch 24:18 And they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers, and served groves and idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass. 2Ch 24:19* ***Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the LORD; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear***.

This is the background to Daniel's captivity, *Dan 1:3 And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children*

of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; Dan 1:4 Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. The Babylonians were not averse to getting the best minds into their service, even Jewish minds. They assimilated the people, so it wasn't about getting a master race, but being in control of a great civilisation with a control over all resources available.

To make them fit in, they were given new names, *Dan 1:6 Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: Dan 1:7 Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego*. Yet despite this Daniel wanted to keep his identity, *Dan 1:8* ***But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.*** *Dan 1:9 Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. Dan 1:10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king. Dan 1:11 Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, Dan 1:12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink*.

Why did Daniel and his friends not take the food offered them, after all, king Jehoiachin ate the kings food? *2Ki 25:27 Jehoiachin was a prisoner in Babylon for thirty-seven years. Then Evil-Merodach became king of Babylonia, and in the first year of his rule, on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month, he let Jehoiachin out of prison. 2Ki 25:28 Evil-Merodach was kind to Jehoiachin and honored him more than any of the other kings held prisoner there. 2Ki 25:29 Jehoiachin was even allowed to wear regular clothes, and he ate at the king's table every day*.

There may be a number of reasons Daniel refused to eat the royal food,

- **Jewish law**: The royal food may have included meat that was not drained of blood, which was forbidden by Jewish law.
- **Ritual offerings**: The royal food may have been used as ritual offerings to Babylonian gods.
- **Defilement**: Daniel believed that eating the royal food would defile him.

But although it isn't said why, I think that there is a clue in the refusal of the grape, wine, *Num 6:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Num 6:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the LORD: Num 6:3 He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and*

shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried. Num 6:4 All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk.

I think that Daniel wanted to set an example to the Jews of faithfulness, and so he took upon himself the Nazarite vow, and separated himself to Elohim, to be utterly faithful in all things, and this was his way of being different. But a Nazarite can eat meat, like Samson, *Jdg 13:7 But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink,* ***neither eat any unclean thing****: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death.* He could eat clean animals but not unclean, very much as the imposition upon ordinary Israelites, *Lev 11:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses and to Aaron, saying unto them, Lev 11:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, These are the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth*.

So why was Daniel insistent upon a vegetarian diet? I think it is because he goes back further in history to Genesis, he goes back to that state of the first Adam, before God flooded the world, in which they were all vegetarian, *Gen 1:29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed;* ***to you it shall be for meat****. Gen 1:30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given* ***every green herb for meat****: and it was so*.

Several Jewish commentators have observed that a vegetarian diet will again be reinstated as the diet of creation during the Messianic Age. The commentators take the text for simply what it says, that animals and man were not originally meat eaters. They point to this Messianic Age as a time when God changes many things back to their Edenic state. This is proven by Isaiah, *Isa 65:24 And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. Isa 65:25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD*.

From his position as a defeated Israelite, from a downtrodden and subservient nation, Daniel stands as a beacon that all is not lost and although the Temple and its contents were taken and abused by the Babylonians, it did not matter, because the Lord was taking the people back to Eden, the paradise of God, *Luk 23:42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. Luk 23:43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise*.

Daniel will introduce us to the wider world. Although not the first prophet to have gone beyond Israel (like the prophet Jonah), Daniel will take us into the realm of the Gentile kingdoms, shown under the guise of the statue with the golden head

and feet of clay, to the four beasts emerging from the sea. He will show us what no other prophet has done, the wider conflict in the world, in which Israel is but a drop in the ocean. The Jews did not hold him to be a prophet,

> In Christian Bibles, Daniel is honoured as the fourth of the so-called "greater" prophets (rather than placed among the "minor" prophets). The original Hebrew Bible (Tanakh) is comprised of the Torah (first five books of Moses), Nevi'im (Prophets) and Ketuv'im (Writings). Together they are known as the T'N'K or Tanakh.
>
> The Book of Daniel is found in the Writings (Ketuv'im) along with the books of Esther, Psalms, Proverbs, and other "non-prophetic" books. Therefore, the book of Daniel is not found in the Prophets (Nevi'im) section, and Daniel himself is not considered a prophet in Judaism.
>
> This is because the Jewish definition of a Biblical prophet is one who had direct communication with God. Daniel, on the other hand, received divine inspiration by the Holy Spirit (Ruach HaKodesh). He never actually saw or heard God.

I do not agree with those Jewish writers, I think that Daniel did see God.

108. Daniel and the Babylonians

Preparatory reading: Daniel Chapter 2

Daniel was one of "the bright young things" of the captivity, *Dan 1:20 And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them* ***ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers*** *that were in all his realm. Dan 1:21 And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus*. He was ranked with the Magicians, the Magi, of ancient Babylon. He was about the same age as Joseph when he entered the captivity according to many estimates, 17 years old, *Dan 1:4 youths in whom was no blemish, and of goodly countenance, and skilful in all wisdom, and acquainted with knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the language of the Chaldeans*. Darby. This is one of the many comparisons with Joseph.

Joseph and Daniel are also the "bookends" of the nation of Israel. Joseph comes to power at the birth of the nation, Daniel comes to power at the close, at the captivity of the nation.

Daniel lived in service until king Cyrus, *Dan 1:21 And Daniel continued unto the first year of king Cyrus*. Cyrus you will observe was a type of Christ, the anointed or **the messiah**, *Isa 45:1 Thus saith the LORD* ***to his anointed (***לכורש למשיחו***)***

to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; From one messiah to the Messiah is 70 weeks, *Dan 9:25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.* I shall not go into it now.

Daniel was a Magi. Joseph and Moses also encountered Magi, *Gen 41:8 And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh*.....*Exo 7:11 Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments*.

The wisdom of the earth is set against the wisdom of heaven, in Joseph and Daniel's encounters with the Magi. What is surprising is that the Magi who operated at least up to the time of Christ, were interested in the event of Jesus birth. If they were unregenerate men this is must be because God held satan at bay for this encounter.

The world's wisdom although not the same as the wisdom from God, but none the less God, enables Christians and non-believers to work together in some things. They may have agreement on anything empirical, or found out by proof, but on the speculative things, and the working of the universe which is mere philosophy, they cannot agree. They cannot agree because although they have God's word, which is to the world, it is foolishness.

Whereas Egypt is a lesser shadow of evil, it seems that Babylon is the full embodiment of evil, and it degenerates with time into the coming kingdoms of the earth which descend from one another, *Rev 17:1 And one of the seven angels, which had the seven bowls, came and spoke with me, saying, Come here, I will shew thee the sentence of* ***the great harlot who sits upon the many waters****; Rev 17:2 with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication; and they that dwell on the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. Rev 17:3 And he carried me away in spirit to a desert; and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. Rev 17:4 And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and had ornaments of gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and the unclean things of her fornication; Rev 17:5 and upon her forehead a name written,* ***Mystery, great Babylon, the mother of the harlots, and of the abominations of the earth****. Rev 17:6 And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. And I wondered, seeing her, with great wonder*.

In the second year of Nebuchadnezzar he is given a dream, Daniel Chapter 2, which gives the history of the nations that centre around Israel, for the next 500 years, *Dan 2:1 And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. Dan 2:2 Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. Dan 2:3 And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream. Dan 2:4 Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation. Dan 2:5 The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghil*. **It is different from Joseph's dream**, *Gen 41:1 And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river. Gen 41:8 And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh*.

Daniel is given a hard task, because he is not told the dream and yet he must interpret it, and there is a threat hanging over him and the other Magi, that they would be killed for not knowing the dream. No pressure then! So Daniel, or Belteshazar as he is known in Chaldean, seeks the answer with his three companions, and they pray, *Dan 2:17 Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions; Dan 2:18 that they would desire mercies of the God of the heavens concerning this secret; that Daniel and his companions should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon*.

The "team" prayers are answered and instead of going into the king with the answer, Daniel has a thanksgiving prayer, *Dan 2:20 Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: Dan 2:21* ***And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding****: Dan 2:22 He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. Dan 2:23 I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee:* ***for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter***.

Daniel's prayer gives us a hint at the answer he will give to the king, "***he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding"***. This might be overlooked by many struggling with the concept of God's Sovereignty. You control human events— you give rulers their power and take it away, and you are the source of wisdom and knowledge.

Nebuchadnezzar may seem like a strong and imposing ruler, but Daniel and his friends, have the measure of this pompous impostor. He will last as long as it is convenient to the Almighty's purpose and not a second longer. You control human events— you give rulers their power and take it away, and you are the source of wisdom and knowledge.

He acknowledges that God alone is the revealer of secrets, but the king must be taught the lesson of sovereignty, *Dan 2:30 But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart*.

He goes in to the king but first of all he has to reveal what the king dreamt before he tells him what it means, *Dan 2:31 Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. Dan 2:32 This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, Dan 2:33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Dan 2:34 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Dan 2:35 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth*.

Daniel goes on to tell the meaning of the dream, *Dan 2:36 This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Dan 2:37 Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. Dan 2:38 And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. Dan 2:39 And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. Dan 2:40 And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. Dan 2:41 And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. Dan 2:42 And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. Dan 2:43 And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. Dan 2:44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Dan 2:45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass,*

the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

Nebuchadnezzar can never thwart the purpose of God, he can never change it and there is nothing he can do to alter the things to come. Daniel knows this but king Nebuchadnezzar does not, and another incident will teach Nebuchadnezzar this, *Dan 4:30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? Dan 4:31 While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. Dan 4:32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee,* ***until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will***.

Nebuchadnezzar's concept of God and the god's of Babylon were a reflection of himself. He supported them and they supported him, because that is exactly what he wanted. They are him. That is why he is to be taught a terrible lesson about Elohim, because God does not bow to the whims and dreams of man. If you ask men what they believe in religious matters, you will find that their beliefs are generally unsupportable. They do not have anything to sustain what they are saying but some go so far as to translate their beliefs into real objects to give substance to their belief. Isaiah points out the folly and contradictory nature of this practice of idolatry*, Isa 44:15 Some of the wood is used to make a fire for heating or for cooking. One piece is made into an idol, then the woodcarver bows down and worships it. Isa 44:16 He enjoys the warm fire and the meat that was roasted over the burning coals. sa 44:17 Afterwards, he bows down to worship the wooden idol. "Protect me!" he says. "You are my god.*" CEV.

Whether it is a wooden god, a crucifix, religious garments, religious titles, relicts of the saints, or some such invention to deceive men from the truth and give them comfort, they will fail because they are the lies of men. I hear people's beliefs with incredulity. How do they believe the rubbish that they concoct? I was talking to a group recently, and without exception, they had no eternal and absolute proof of what they held dear to them. The things that they all believed were nothing in the light of Christ. All were attempting to come to terms with the looming end to life, but none of them would consider the claims of Christ, the only One to have come back from the dead and told us about it.

That is what Nebuchadnezzar is shown, "*Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces."…….. "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."* The stone that broke these

kingdoms which man sets up, the imaginations of the heart, was Christ, *Mat 21:44 And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. Mat 21:45 And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them*.

But Nebuchadnezzar receives the interpretation of the dream with gratitude. It said nothing untoward about his kingdom, in fact it said it was the greatest kingdom that the world would know, like unto gold. He thinks that it is a sign of God's favour, condoning all that he does, but it is not as we shall see, *Dan 4:27 Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity*.

For now the king is basking in his divine favour, and getting ahead of himself, and so decides to make a statue, but unlike the image he had in his dream, with just a golden head he makes the whole thing of gold. He believes what he wants and interprets it to suit himself, and he thinks that he is lord of time and that his kingdom will last forever, and so he makes a monument to Babylon, a statue of Gold from head to toe. He has not learned a thing about Elohim.

109. The Madness of King Nebuchadnezzar

Preparatory reading: Daniel Chapter 3

*Dan 3:1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was **threescore cubits (60 cubits), and the breadth thereof six cubits**: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. Dan 3:2 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Dan 3:3 Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Dan 3:4 Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, Dan 3:5 That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: Dan 3:6 And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace*.

Nebuchadnezzar had been given the interpretation of his dream in which five degenerative kingdoms were shown in the form of a man, *"Its head was made of gold, its chest and arms were silver, and from its waist down to its knees, it was bronze. From there to its ankles it was iron, and its feet were a mixture of iron and clay*." His kingdom was the golden age, and it seems that he decided to make a statue entirely of gold to celebrate himself. The statue or obelisk, the thin man of gold was ninety feet high and nine feet wide and it appears to have had its inauguration with an orchestra, *Dan 3:7 The band started to play, a huge band equipped with all the musical instruments of Babylon, and everyone - every race, colour, and creed - fell to their knees and worshiped the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.*

Message: Elohim was just another one of his coterie of "Gods" and he was suffering delusions of grandeur, because it was not worship of the god's but worship of Nebuchadnezzar, they "*worshiped the gold statue* ***that King Nebuchadnezzar*** *had set up".*

The sound was the cue to worship, but why? There is in this evil man and the beast which he gives life to, an echo of what is to come, *Rev 13:14 This second beast fooled people on earth by working miracles for the first one. Then it talked them into making an idol in the form of the beast that did not die after being wounded by a sword. Rev 13:15 It was allowed to put breath into the idol, so that it could speak. Everyone who refused to worship the idol of the beast was put to death. Rev 13:16 All people were forced to put a mark on their right hand or forehead. Whether they were powerful or weak, rich or poor, free people or slaves, Rev 13:17 they all had to have this mark, or else they could not buy or sell anything. This mark stood for the name of the beast and for the number of its name. Rev 13:18 You need wisdom to understand the number of the beast! But if you are smart enough, you can figure this out. Its number is six hundred sixty-six, and it stands for a person.* CEV.

The number 6 comes into play again, the number of man, and Babylonian mathematics used a sexagesimal (base 60) system that was so functional it remains in effect, albeit with some tweaks, in the 21st century. Whenever people tell time or make reference to the degrees of a circle, they rely on the base 60 system.

The sound that comes with Christ though does not bow down men but lifts them up, *Act 2:2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. Act 2:3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. Act 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance*.

I see in this the sound of the trumpet which shall signal the end of all earthly schemes, and once and for all consign Babylon to its place in history, and that event is the coming of Christ in Judgement, *1Co 15:52 In a moment, in the*

twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 1Co 15:53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. The flesh oppresses and men are bowed down, but the Spirit raises men from the dead.

The three friends of Daniel refused to obey the kings edict, *Dan 3:8 Some Babylonians used this as a chance to accuse the Jews to King Nebuchadnezzar. Dan 3:9 They said, "Your Majesty, we hope you live forever! Dan 3:10 You commanded everyone to bow down and worship the gold statue when the music played. Dan 3:11 And you said that anyone who did not bow down and worship it would be thrown into a flaming furnace. Dan 3:12 Sir, you appointed three men to high positions in Babylon Province, but they have disobeyed you. Those Jews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, refuse to worship your gods and the statue you have set up."* CEV.

They offer no resistance to the king other than passive resistance, like Peter's refusal to obey the Sanhedrin, *Act 4:16 "What can we do with these men? Everyone in Jerusalem knows about this miracle, and we cannot say it didn't happen. Act 4:17 But to keep this thing from spreading, we will warn them never again to speak to anyone about the name of Jesus." Act 4:18 So they called the two apostles back in and told them that they must never, for any reason, teach anything about the name of Jesus. Act 4:19 Peter and John answered, "Do you think God wants us to obey you or to obey him? Act 4:20 We cannot keep quiet about what we have seen and heard."* CEV.

Kings are not always good or right, and we take our lives in our hands when we oppose them, and that is just what they did, *Dan 3:15 Now I am going to give you one more chance. If you bow down and worship the statue when you hear the music, everything will be all right. But if you don't, you will at once be thrown into a flaming furnace. No god can save you from me." Dan 3:16 The three men replied, "Your Majesty, we don't need to defend ourselves. Dan 3:17 The God we worship can save us from you and your flaming furnace. Dan 3:18* ***But even if he doesn't, we still won't worship your gods and the gold statue you have set up."*** *Dan 3:19 Nebuchadnezzar's face twisted with anger at the three men. And he ordered the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than usual*. With a resignation to providence, the will not obey and will willingly accept the consequences, even if God will not deliver them. Many a martyr has gone to the flames without rescue, and shows that God is not at all inclined to make a general rule about saving His sons from a violent death, but in this instance made an exception.

Where was Daniel in all of this? Daniel is not mentioned in this incident. Its possible that he was not present, or that the jealous court advisors were too afraid to challenge him, *Dan 2:48 The king then presented Daniel with a lot of gifts; he promoted him to governor of Babylon Province and put him in charge of the other wise men. Dan 2:49 At Daniel's request, the king appointed Shadrach,*

Meshach, and Abednego to high positions in Babylon Province, and he let Daniel stay on as a palace official. CEV. What's implausible is that Daniel chose to dishonour God by committing idolatry, *Dan 6:4 The other men tried to find something wrong with the way Daniel did his work for the king. But they could not accuse him of anything wrong, because he was honest and faithful and did everything he was supposed to do. Dan 6:5 Finally, they said to one another, "We will never be able to bring any charge against Daniel, unless it has to do with his religion."* CEV.

The three men were then cast in the furnace, *Dan 3:21Then the three men were thrown into the blazing furnace. They were wearing their clothes, hats, and other clothing. Dan 3:22 The king's order was so urgent and the furnace was so extremely hot that the men who carried Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were killed by the flames from the fire. Dan 3:23 So these three men-Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego-fell into the blazing furnace. They were still tied up. Dan 3:24 Then Nebuchadnezzar was startled. He sprang to his feet. He asked his advisers, "Didn't we throw three men into the fire?" "That's true, Your Majesty," they answered. Dan 3:25 The king replied, "But look, I see four men. They're untied, walking in the middle of the fire, and unharmed.* ***The fourth one looks like a son of the gods.****" Dan 3:26 Then Nebuchadnezzar went to the door of the blazing furnace and said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego-servants of the Most High God-come out here." Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire. Dan 3:27 The king's satraps, governors, mayors, and advisers gathered around the three men. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies. The hair on their heads wasn't singed, their clothes weren't burned, and they didn't smell of smoke.* GW.

This event was to show the Babylonians that the three men had Divine protection and that the king's word was not law. Their God, Elohim, was more powerful than all the other gods of Nebuchadnezzar, and whatever the king made or said was subject to the almighty God. The world of Babylon the great will get men to dance to its tune, but in "one hour" it will collapse. Millions of worshippers who hear the call of the muezzin to prayer, hear the tinkling bell of the mass, and fall down not knowing why or who they are worshipping, are not worshipping Elohim.

Elohim did not just make a point by delivering them, He made a point of being with the men in the furnace," ***the fourth one looks like a son of the gods***", says king Nebuchadnezzar. How would he know anyway? But there He was, the fourth man, the one who untied the bound men and gave them their lives. Who was He, the fourth man? I think that it was Jesus. He saves us from the fires of hell that we make ourselves that we torment ourselves with because we never do what God wants, and when this life is done with we carry into eternity that eternal regret. This life is a rehearsal for hell, and for many millions their hell here will continue hereafter.

Am I saying that God does not punish us? No I am not, in the sense that He determines the sentence, that He determines what is righteous, that He sets the bounds of hell, and He sets the terms of the punishment, He does punish us. But I am saying that He does not inflict the suffering that men will endure because they do that to themselves. God cuts Himself off from the lost, forever.

It is a law of the universe, just as lust is of man's making and not God's, *Jas 1:13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: Jas 1:14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Jas 1:15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death*. You cannot blame God for your sin, and the consequences of sin, hell, is yours to bear.

There are no stokers in hell, no devils prodding people, only men sorrowing over what could have been, *Luk 16:23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Luk 16:24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. Luk 16:25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented*.

This innumerable multitude of the raised dead, from all of time, from Adam's first descendants to modern man, all the people that you thought were dead, your friends in childhood, adults who you were unkind to, people you cheated, the politicians who lied to you, the scientists that you believed but really did not know anything and led you away from Christ, the Christ haters and the bigots who persuaded you that this place to which you have come, hell, was not real. The churchmen who told you that being baptised made you a Christian, the preachers who neglected to tell you about hell, the ministers who gave you peace when there was no peace, and those who insisted when you finally went into the ground, that you were a "dearly beloved brother or sister in Christ" when you knew that you were not.

All these people, we will meet in hell and we will torment one another over the deceits which brought us to this place. The small, the great and the downright criminal, will be at your disposal to question, but there will be no satisfaction in their answers for it will be too late. You will have the villains of history, the Hitler's of this world, the mass killers all being assaulted by their victims to no avail. And I think that just as language at Pentecost was united for believers, in hell the same occurs, except they will not hear the wonderful works of God, they hear each other's language as their own and know the crimes that have been committed.

As believers are raised in new bodies what are the bodies of unbelievers like? *1Co 15:35 But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what*

body do they come? 1Co 15:36 Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: 1Co 15:37 And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: 1Co 15:38 But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

This leads to another thought. Why should the wicked dead have a body which in any way resembles the body that they had on earth. Dawkin's that vile evolutionary deceiver might have the body of an ape, most fitting for him. Stalin might have the body of a snake, Mao might have the body of a fat slug. The devil appears as a snake so why not have people raised to hell in animal forms, after all they behaved like animals in life? One thing is sure and that is the place called hell is a place to be avoided.

King Nebuchadnezzar thought he could master hell, that he could be the stoker, that being ruler he could command hell, but he was wrong, the Son of God will save us from our sins and there is no hell for the believer, only heaven.

Dan 3:28 King Nebuchadnezzar said: Praise their God for sending an angel to rescue his servants! They trusted their God and refused to obey my commands. Yes, they chose to die rather than to worship or serve any god except their own. Dan 3:29 And I won't allow people of any nation or race to say anything against their God. Anyone who does will be chopped up and their houses will be torn down, because no other god has such great power to save. Dan 3:30 After this happened, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to even higher positions in Babylon Province.

110. The Animal in Man

Preparatory reading: Daniel Chapter 4

The "man" of Nebuchadnezzar's first dream shares an organic unity, its interdependent parts work together to create a whole that's greater than the sum of its parts. It is one body, but of different substances and it starts with the head of gold. It is a unified body, the antichrist, and with each successive iteration, from gold, silver, brass, clay and mud, showing a degenerative progression. Nebuchadnezzar tried to make a complete body of gold, and he tries to get the people to worship it, but he fails and the decline is inevitable because of sin.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream has as its counterpart Christ and His Body, the church, *Col 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.* One body is destined for decline and the other is destined for Glory. Nebuchadnezzar is the worldly religion set for decline, whereas Christ's is set for glory to glory,

the kingdom of man looks good but will be destroyed but the kingdom of God is triumphant, *2Co 3:17 The Lord and the Spirit are one and the same, and the Lord's Spirit sets us free. 2Co 3:18 So our faces are not covered. They show the bright glory of the Lord, as the Lord's Spirit makes us more and more like our glorious Lord.* CEV.

The two kingdoms, the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of man are opposed, but exist together by the will of God, and the kingdom of man is called Babylon, *Rev 17:17 God is the one who made these kings all think alike and decide to give their power to the beast. And they will do this until what God has said comes true. Rev 17:18The woman you saw is the great city that rules over all kings on earth.* It is the unity of fallen man, the money market from which love flows to the men who are opposed to Christ, it is also the pit which harbours demons, *Rev 18:2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. Rev 18:3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. Rev 18:4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. Rev 18:5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Rev 18:6 Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double*.

The kingdom of Babylon continued to exist through the nations that would come after it because it was all part of the same body and it gradually accumulates all the ungodly as it rolls through time. Proud arrogant Nebuchadnezzar, the man who dreamed the dream that spelled out the course of history, no doubt thought that because he had a communication from God and that he was blessed. Well judge for yourself, because the next dream that he has spells his downfall, and it troubles him, *Dan 4:4 I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace: Dan 4:5 I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me.*

It was another fail for the wise men of Babylon, because they could not interpret it and to give them their due and they did not attempt to pull the wool over the king’s eyes and give him a false interpretation. Call in Daniel or Belteshazzar as the king preferred to call him, named after Bel, his favourite god, and let him sort out the dream. The king certainly takes his dreams seriously, *Job 4:12 Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. Job 4:13 In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men*.

Job had them and Daniel had them, *Dan 7:13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. Dan 7:14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and*

languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. Dreams may come to us as the communication of God but what do we do with them?

This time the king speaks his dream, *Dan 4:19 Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonied for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies. Dan 4:20 The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; Dan 4:21 Whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: Dan 4:22 It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth. Dan 4:23 And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him*;

It is suggested the “seven times” are seven years, a long time to consider his ways, *Rom 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;* Just as the degradation was seen in the figure of a man, the composite statue with the golden head, shown in Nebuchadnezzar’s first dream, Nebuchadnezzar himself undergoes the same transformation, *Dan 4:29 At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. Dan 4:30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? Dan 4:31 While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. Dan 4:32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. Dan 4:33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.* The beast within the man is shown.

King Nebuchadnezzar might have a golden age among men, he might be privileged to have been made head of that dynasty but that did not mean that he had a golden heart. He was arrogant, proud, and cruel, lacking all the refinements which a true knowledge of God brings. It was while walking along the ramparts of Babylon that it happened to him, while admiring the work of his own hands, while thinking of his kingdom that he had built to honour himself,

with no thought of the God who had allowed this, that it happened, *Dan 4:29 At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. Dan 4:30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? Dan 4:31 While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken;* ***The kingdom is departed from thee****.*

In an instant he is reduced to the animal that lurks inside all of us. The only difference between man and beast is the Spirit of God, *Gen 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul*. The beast did not have the Spirit of God. The beast does not enjoy the same communication with the *creator, Psa 73:22 So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee*. The beast is separated from the creator*, Ecc 3:20 All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Ecc 3:21 Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth*? In that instant he is given another "heart", a beasts heart to do a beasts deeds, *Dan 4:16 Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him*.

This beast king prefigures the beast of Revelation, and we should not consider that he is intelligent enough to work alone, *Rev 13:4 And* ***they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast****, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? Rev 13:5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. Rev 13:6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. Rev 13:7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. Rev 13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

The "beast" is powered by the "dragon". In the world of symbolism which surrounds and partially obscures the actors, we are told just who the "dragon" is, it is the devil, *Rev 20:2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.* The beast has behind him the satanic forces, and as we know, he has his own plan which is to destroy the Messiah. The devil is behind the arrogance of Nebuchadnezzar and we see in the bigger picture not just the workings of man but the workings of principalities and powers.

Jeremiah gives us a perspective on the subject, *Jer 27:4 And command them to say unto their masters, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say unto your masters; Jer 27:5 I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm,*

and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. Jer 27:6 And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. Jer 27:7 And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him. Jer 27:8 And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand.

As Robert Browning said, “God’s in His heaven — all ’s right with the world!” Well not exactly, all is in God’s control in the world and we should not forget this. Every raving lunatic, psychotic, megalomaniac dictator who thinks it is his world, will eventually find out he was wrong. It is God’s world.

The dream of Nebuchadnezzar is relevant to the Christian age as is seen from the book of Revelation. I use it for general illustration, but it is a book which is very difficult to interpret because it depends on whether you take it as a linear story or whether you take it as a series of the same stories viewed from different perspectives. Either way, the whole book centres around the day of the Lord, *Rev 1:10* ***I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day****, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet*, and it is seeing things from the Spirit’s perspective.

In this state, John sees the career of the beast, who I take to be the rule or kingship of man, *Rev 13:16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive* ***a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:*** *Rev 13:17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Rev 13:18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six*.

The beast will get mankind to align with his godless practice, and substitute mammon, wealth for the word of God, *Deu 6:6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: Deu 6:7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Deu 6:8* ***And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes****. Deu 6:9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates*. There is a difference between the believer and unbeliever as to what they have written on their hand and heads.

The mark of the beast, the mark of Nebuchadnezzar, is the disobedience to our Lord, and it is similar to king Uzziah’s leprosy, *2Ch 26:20 And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous* ***in his forehead****, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go*

out, because the LORD had smitten him. Exactly in the place where he should have had the law, right in front of him, between his eyes, is the place where the sign of judgement occurs, and it is the sign of corruption.

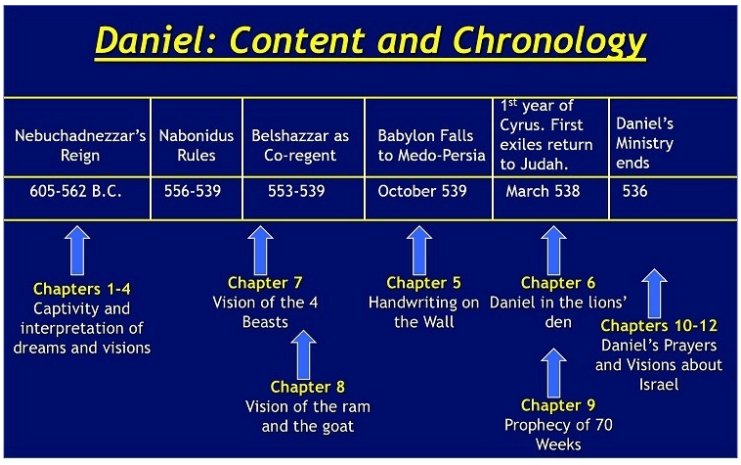
The other thing I will say about the beast is that he supports the whole of "Babylon", everything it stands for and everything that it is, *Rev 17:3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. Rev 17:4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: Rev 17:5 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. Rev 17:6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration*.

We will always conflict with the worlds system until we accept that the kingdom belongs to the Almighty. When Nebuchadnezzar sees this he is restored to his rightful mind, *Dan 4:34 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation*:

111. Belshazzar's Feast

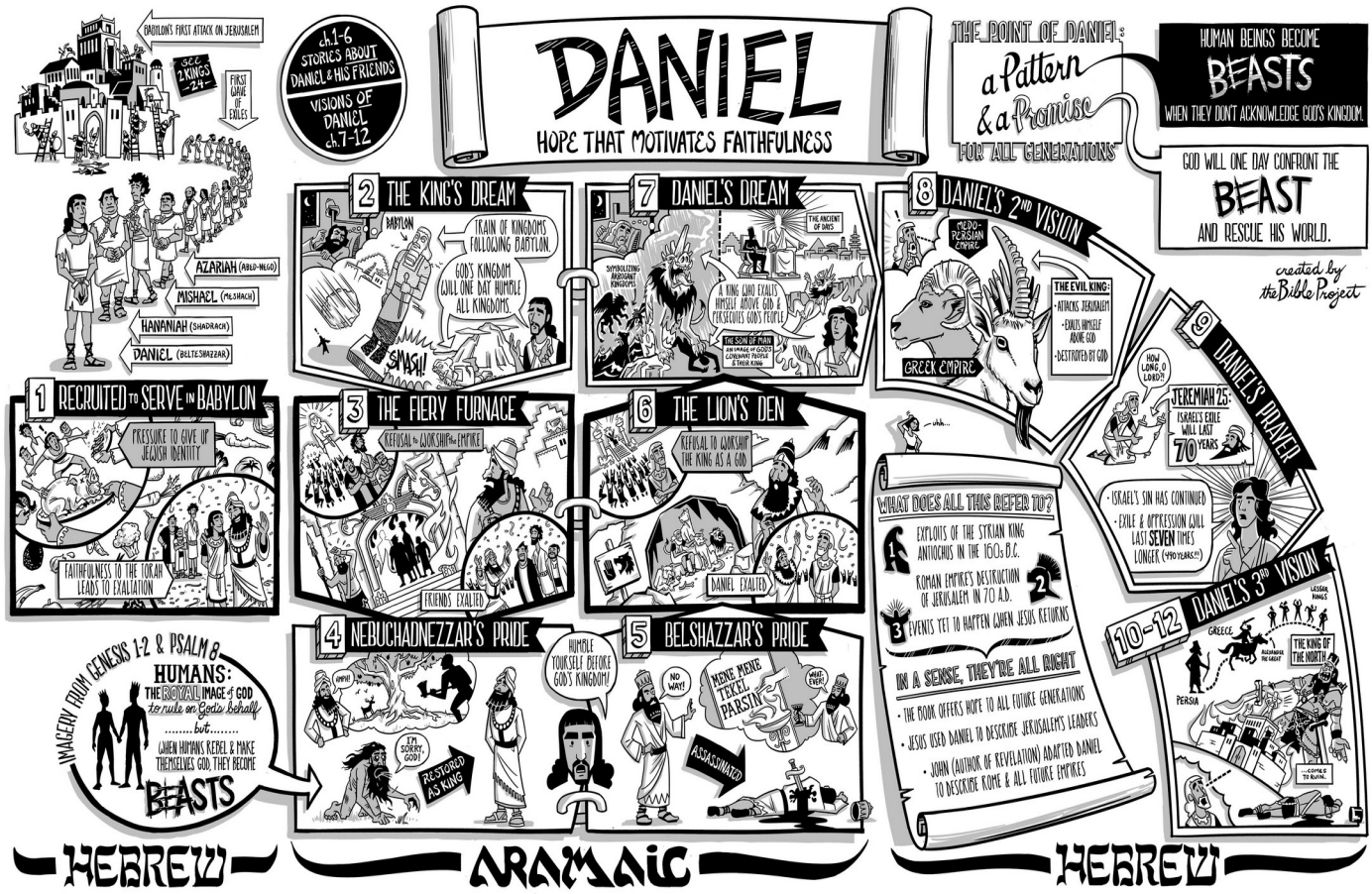
Preparatory reading: Daniel Chapter 5

Here is a summary of the Chronology of Daniel, which is not written in the exact order of events. Belshazzar's death is recorded at the end of Chapter 5, but we see him **alive again** in Chapters 7 and 8. Why is this? It is due to the structure of the book of Daniel.


Daniel: Content and Chronology
Nebuchadnezzar's Reign
Nabonidus Rules
Belshazzar as Co-regent
Babylon Falls to Medo-Persia
1st year of Cyrus. First exiles return to Judah.
Daniel's Ministry ends
605-562 B.C.
556-539
553-539
October 539
March 538
536
Chapters 1-4 Captivity and interpretation of dreams and visions
Chapter 7 Vision of the 4 Beasts
Chapter 8 Vision of the ram and the goat
Chapter 5 Handwriting on the Wall
Chapter 6 Daniel in the lions' den
Chapter 9 Prophecy of 70 Weeks
Chapters 10-12 Daniel's Prayers and Visions about Israel

Lesson: Chronology is not the same as Structure.

The Bible Project Team have suggested a structure, and I recommend that you look at it.


DANIEL
HOPE THAT MOTIVATES FAITHFULNESS
BABYLON'S FIRST ATTACK ON JERUSALEM
SEE 2 KINGS 24
FIRST WAVE OF EXILES
AZARIAH (ABED-NEGO)
MISHAEL (MESHACH)
HANANIAH (SHADRACH)
DANIEL (BELTESHAZZAR)
ch.1-6 STORIES ABOUT DANIEL & HIS FRIENDS
VISIONS OF DANIEL ch.7-12
1 RECRUITED TO SERVE IN BABYLON
PRESSURE TO GIVE UP JEWISH IDENTITY
FAITHFULNESS TO THE TORAH LEADS TO EXALTATION
2 THE KING'S DREAM
BABYLON
TRAIN OF KINGDOMS FOLLOWING BABYLON
GOD'S KINGDOM WILL ONE DAY HUMBLE ALL KINGDOMS
SMASH!
3 THE FIERY FURNACE
REFUSAL TO WORSHIP THE EMPIRE
FRIENDS EXALTED
4 NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S PRIDE
OHH!
I'M SORRY, GOD!
RESTORED AS KING
5 BELSHAZZAR'S PRIDE
HUMBLE YOURSELF BEFORE GOD'S KINGDOM!
NO WAY!
MENE MENE TEKEL PARSIN
WHAT EVER!
ASSASSINATED
6 THE LION'S DEN
REFUSAL TO WORSHIP THE KING AS A GOD
DANIEL EXALTED
7 DANIEL'S DREAM
THE ANCIENT OF DAYS
SYMBOLIZING ARROGANT KINGDOMS
A KING WHO EXALTS HIMSELF ABOVE GOD & PERSECUTES GOD'S PEOPLE
THE SON OF MAN AN IMAGE OF GOD'S KINGDOM'S PEOPLE & THEIR KING
8 DANIEL'S 2ND VISION
MEDO-PERSIAN EMPIRE
GREEK EMPIRE
THE EVIL KING:
• ATTACKS JERUSALEM
• EXALTS HIMSELF ABOVE GOD
• DESTROYED BY GOD
9 DANIEL'S PRAYER
HOW LONG, O LORD?!
JEREMIAH 25: ISRAEL'S EXILE WILL LAST 70 YEARS
• ISRAEL'S SIN HAS CONTINUED
• EXILE & OPPRESSION WILL LAST SEVEN TIMES LONGER (490 YEARS!!!)
10-12 DANIEL'S 3RD VISION
GREECE
ALEXANDER THE GREAT
THE KING OF THE NORTH
PERSIA
LESSER KINGS
...COMPARE TO REVIEW
WHAT DOES ALL THIS REFER TO?
EXPLOITS OF THE SYRIAN KING ANTIOCHUS IN THE 160s B.C.
ROMAN EMPIRE'S DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM IN 70 A.D.
EVENTS YET TO HAPPEN WHEN JESUS RETURNS
IN A SENSE, THEY'RE ALL RIGHT
• THE BOOK OFFERS HOPE TO ALL FUTURE GENERATIONS
• JESUS USED DANIEL TO DESCRIBE JERUSALEM'S LEADERS
• JOHN (AUTHOR OF REVELATION) ADAPTED DANIEL TO DESCRIBE ROME & ALL FUTURE EMPIRES
IMAGERY FROM GENESIS 1-2 & PSALM 8
HUMANS: THE ROYAL IMAGE of GOD to rule on God's behalf
.....but.....
WHEN HUMANS REBEL & MAKE THEMSELVES GOD, THEY BECOME BEASTS
HEBREW
ARAMAIC
HEBREW
THE POINT OF DANIEL: a Pattern & a Promise FOR ALL GENERATIONS
HUMAN BEINGS BECOME BEASTS WHEN THEY DON'T ACKNOWLEDGE GOD'S KINGDOM.
GOD WILL ONE DAY CONFRONT THE BEAST AND RESCUE HIS WORLD.
created by the Bible Project

The events leading **up to** the death of Belshazzar are given in Chapter 7 and 8. In the **First year** of Balshazzar Daniel continues his theme of “king/beasts”, *Dan 7:17 These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. Dan 7:18 But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever*.

In the **Third year** of Belshazzar, *Dan 8:20 The two horns of the ram are the kings of Media and Persia, Dan 8:21 the goat is the kingdom of Greece, and the powerful horn between his eyes is the first of its kings. Dan 8:22 After this horn is broken, four other kingdoms will appear, but they won't be as strong. Dan 8:23 When these rulers have become as evil as possible, their power will end, and then a king who is dangerous and cannot be trusted will appear. Dan 8:24 He will gain strength, but not on his own, and he will cause terrible destruction. He will wipe out powerful leaders and God's people as well.* CEV. The fingers of the hand appear after these visions, to stamp God’s authority on history.

Daniel, like Joseph, has been thrust into a place where he might not have chosen to go, but it focused the minds of both men on the service to the Lord in a wonderful way, and it is the making of them. In the world of the Babylonians there were certain times that they were so absolutely stumped for the meaning of dreams or events that they had to call upon Daniel, a servant of God, the Old Testament equivalent of the Christian, to help them understand what God was doing.

This happened to the next ruler, and what had happened was all due to the fact that he had not heeded the things that had happened to his father, *Dan 5:22 King Belshazzar, you knew all of this, but you still refused to honour the Lord who rules from heaven. Dan 5:23 Instead, you turned against him and ordered the cups from his temple to be brought here, so that you and your wives and officials could drink wine from them. You praised idols made of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone, even though they cannot see or hear or think. You refused to worship the God who gives you breath and controls everything you do. Dan 5:24 That's why he sent the hand to write this message on the wall*. CEV.

Daniel seems almost bored when he is brought in to the king, perhaps because it is déjà vu, and there is little chance this king would heed the warning*, Dan 5:14 I was told that the gods have given you special powers and that you are intelligent and very wise. Dan 5:15 Neither my advisors nor the men who talk with the spirits of the dead could read this writing or tell me what it means. Dan 5:16 But I have been told that you understand everything and that you can solve difficult problems. Now then, if you can read this writing and tell me what it means, you will become the third most powerful man in my kingdom. You will wear royal purple robes and have a gold chain around your neck. Dan 5:17 Daniel answered:* ***Your Majesty, I will read the writing and tell you what it means. But you may keep your gifts or give them to someone else***. CEV.

You know the story by now, and that the king has called for the vessels of God's sanctuary in order to toast his gods*, Dan 5:2 Belshazzar, whiles he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. Dan 5:3 Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. Dan 5:4* ***They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone***. CEV.

Belshazzar takes the most holy of God's golden vessels, and instead of offerings to serve Jehovah, he honours the imaginary gods of his own making and blasphemes the Almighty. Belshazzar gives praise to idols, and he is like a ventriloquists dummy, which speaks the words of someone else who pulls his strings, and that person is the devil. All of a sudden he sees a part of a human

hand behind a lampstand, it comes out of the solid wall into view, something like a disembodied phantasm, writing something in a language not known to him, *Dan 5:5 Suddenly a human hand was seen writing on the plaster wall of the palace. The hand was just behind the lampstand, and the king could see it writing. Dan 5:6 He was so frightened that his face turned pale, his knees started shaking, and his legs became weak.* CEV.

The king is in his cups, and all the people are enjoying his mockery, the place is full of laughter when silence and shock causes them to stop, and there is in that silence a drawing of breath, a gasp of incredulity as the finger of God writes on the stone a message for all to see but not to understand. God does not deign to talk to them in there language, and this message, I think is not for them, *Mat 13:14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: Mat 13:15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them*.

Daniel gives meaning to the unintelligible script, *Dan 5:25The words written there are mene, which means "numbered," tekel, which means "weighed," and parsin, which means "divided." God has numbered the days of your kingdom and has brought it to an end. He has weighed you on his balance scales, and you fall short of what it takes to be king. So God has divided your kingdom between the Medes and the Persians.* CEV. The man is given the news that he is about to lose his kingdom but strangely it does not concern him. For stupid Belshazzar, it is too late for him to do anything about it, not that he seems to care or repent, indeed his reaction is not to kill the messenger of such grim tidings, but to reward Daniel with yet another promotion, not that he is looking for it.

When we read about the lives of Joseph and Daniel, we see that they both received honours from the world’s rulers but little is known about their private lives. I do not think that their private lives were self-indulgent in keeping with their position at the court. I do not see Daniel indulging in the excesses of the Babylonian feasts, in fact Daniel has to be called in to give his interpretation. In keeping with the people of God, *Tit 2:12 It teaches us not to live against God and not to do the bad things the world wants to do. It teaches us to live on earth now in a wise and right way—a way that shows true devotion to God. Tit 2:13 We should live like that while we are waiting for the coming of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. He is our great hope, and he will come with glory*. ERV. Daniel and Joseph were very ordinary people, with extraordinary relationships with the Lord. They grew so close to the Lord that they were privy to His thoughts.

Christians today seem to be so involved in doing things for the world that they have little or no time for the Lord, certainly not the 3 weeks the Daniel sought the Lord, *Dan 10:1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed*

unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing is true, but the appointed time of trial is long; and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision. Dan 10:2 In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks: Darby. I think that these old saints had different priorities to us modern folk.

That Divine writing must have stayed on that banqueting house wall for some considerable time, in fact I am sure the Medes and the Persians would have loved to look at it as a divine confirmation of their right to rule, written with the finger of God. The same finger that had written the Law of Moses on the tablets of stone, *Exo 31:18And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God*. In Luke's gospel Jesus shows the Divine power of His Law over evil, *Luk 11:20 But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you*.

Another New Testament occasion that Jesus wrote with His finger, the finger of God, was when the accusers of the woman taken in the act of adultery appeared before him. What did Jesus write with His finger? *Joh 8:6 They asked Jesus this question, because they wanted to test him and bring some charge against him. But Jesus simply bent over and started writing on the ground with his finger. Joh 8:7 They kept on asking Jesus about the woman. Finally, he stood up and said, "If any of you have never sinned, then go ahead and throw the first stone at her!" Joh 8:8 Once again he bent over and began writing on the ground. Joh 8:9 The people left one by one, beginning with the oldest. Finally, Jesus and the woman were there alone*. CEV.

I think the same finger that wrote in the dust before that woman was the same finger that wrote at Belshazzar's feast, and I would speculate that the same message was given to those hypocrites of Jesus day who dragged the poor sinner to justice but neglected their own sins. For Israel according to the flesh it was the same message as to Babylon, "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN". God has numbered the days of your kingdom and has brought it to an end. He has weighed you on his balance scales, and you fall short of what it takes to be king.

The scribes and the Pharisees, the pillars of Jewish society, the lawgivers, were rotten to their core, only concerned with externals of righteousness, meanwhile leaving their inward parts as a stinking corpse, rotting in the dark recesses of their mind. It doesn't matter how religious you are, or for that matter, whether you call yourself a "Christian", if you have not been changed by the Lord, you have not been changed. Going to "church" does not make you a Christian any more than going to a garage makes you a car.

112. Daniel's Privileges

Preparatory reading: Daniel Chapters 10 - 12

We come to the end of our examination of the lives of Joseph and Daniel, those two stalwarts of the faith. There is in their behaviour something of an “other worldliness”, by which I mean that they do not go through life doing things for the gain that they bring them personally, in this life, but work for the Glory of God. They seem quite resigned to the fact that they are doing the will of God and that is their allotted task, and they happily go about it. Daniel’s reaction to Balshazzars gift for interpreting the writing on the wall is, *Dan 5:17 Daniel answered: Your Majesty, I will read the writing and tell you what it means. But you may keep your gifts or give them to someone else*. CEV.

He didn’t want man’s rewards for something that God alone had done, and he is guarded against such people, just as was Peter to Simon Magus, *Act 8:20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.* The old saints have a different attitude to modern saints who like the “high places in the feasts” and the “salutations of man”. They knew Who they worked for and didn’t claim to be anybody other than a servant of Jesus, *Luk 17:10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do*.

Another feature of the two men in their captivity is the lack of a vengeful spirit, an attempt to bring down their captors, to foment rebellion against them for having taken them from the comfort of their homes. They, to the contrary, support the regimes which have taken them captive and we see the enactment of, *Rom 13:1 Obey the rulers who have authority over you. Only God can give authority to anyone, and he puts these rulers in their places of power. Rom 13:2 People who oppose the authorities are opposing what God has done, and they will be punished. Rom 13:3 Rulers are a threat to evil people, not to good people. There is no need to be afraid of the authorities. Just do right, and they will praise you for it*. CEV. They recognise the hand of God and kiss it in obedience.

This is a lesson for us in our seeming uncertain times, not to look at the world as if it controls our destinies, it does not. The times, the season’s, the events, are all in the Lord’s hands. We come into this world with nothing and we leave with nothing, it does not benefit us at all materially because we take nothing physical from it. But the life lived will be assessed by Christ in terms of what we did for Him and how we treated people and obeyed Him, and it is those things that we take from the world. As Christians we get so close to this world that we start to think like it and before long we are indistinguishable from it. We must see it for what it is and adopt those attitudes of the old saints*, Jas 5:8 Be patient like those farmers and don't give up. The Lord will soon be here! Jas 5:9 Don't grumble about each other or you will be judged, and the judge is right outside the door. Jas 5:10 My friends, follow the example of the prophets who spoke for the Lord. They were patient, even when they had to suffer.* CEV.

Daniel's later years are marked by a deeper communion with the Lord. From Chapter 9 onward, we see Daniel's concern for the people of God, his advocacy and the Lord's comfort in telling him of the future.

After the death of king Belshazar and later on being cast to the lions by king Darius, Daniel searched the writings of Jeremiah the prophet to see how long Jerusalem would lie in ruins, *Dan 9:1 Daniel wrote: Some years later, Darius the Mede, who was the son of Xerxes, had become king of Babylonia. And during his first year as king, I found out from studying the writings of the prophets that the LORD had said to Jeremiah, "Jerusalem will lie in ruins for seventy years." Dan 9:2 (SEE 9:1) Dan 9:3 Then, to show my sorrow, I went without eating and dressed in sackcloth and sat in ashes. I confessed my sins and earnestly prayed to the LORD my God: Our Lord, you are a great and fearsome God, and you faithfully keep your agreement with those who love and obey you. Dan 9:4 (SEE 9:3) Dan 9:5 But we have sinned terribly by rebelling against you and rejecting your laws and teachings. Dan 9:6 We have ignored the message your servants the prophets spoke to our kings, our leaders, our ancestors, and everyone else. Dan 9:7 Everything you do is right, our Lord. But still we suffer public disgrace because we have been unfaithful and have sinned against you. This includes all of us, both far and near—the people of Judah, Jerusalem, and Israel, as well as those you dragged away to foreign lands, Dan 9:8 and even our kings, our officials, and our ancestors*. CEV.

Although the nation of Israel/Judah had served the punishment and Jerusalem and the land had observed **the land Sabbath** for 70 years, *Jer 25:11 And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Jer 25:12 And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations. Jer 25:13 And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations*, the people, as Daniel confesses, are still a public disgrace because they remained unfaithful to the Lord. The man Gabriel comes to him and tells him what shall come to pass.

The man Gabriel, I take to be the same person as in Luke's Gospel who appeared to Zacharias, *Luk 1:18 And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. Luk 1:19 And the angel answering said unto him, **I am Gabriel,** that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings*. He also appeared to Mary, *Luk 1:26 And in the sixth month **the angel Gabriel** was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, Luk 1:27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary*. His name means "El is a strong man". It is interesting that this angel is male, a men, so in the afterlife, when we are like the angels, we shall apparently retain aspects of gender.

This is Gabriel's message, *Dan 9:24* ***Seventy weeks*** *are shortened upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, that transgression may be finished, and sin may have an end, and iniquity may be abolished; and everlasting justice may be brought; and vision and prophecy may be fulfilled; and the Saint of saints may be anointed. Dan 9:25 Know thou, therefore, and take notice: that from the going forth of the word, to build up Jerusalem again****, unto Christ, the prince****, there shall be* ***seven weeks****, and* ***sixty-two weeks****: and the street shall be built again, and the walls, in straitness of times. Dan 9:26 And after sixty-two weeks* ***Christ shall be slain****: and the people that shall deny him shall not be his. And a people, with their leader, that shall come, shall destroy the city, and the sanctuary: and the end thereof shall be waste, and after the end of the war the appointed desolation. Dan 9:27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many, in* ***one week****: and in the half of the week the victim and the sacrifice shall fail: and there shall be in the temple the abomination of desolation: and the desolation shall continue even to the consummation, and to the end.* DRB

It is a vision of the coming Messiah, the **Christ**, *Dan 9:20 I was still confessing my sins and those of all Israel to the LORD my God, and I was praying for the good of his holy mountain, Dan 9:21 when Gabriel suddenly came flying in at the time of the evening sacrifice. This was the same Gabriel I had seen in my vision, Dan 9:22 and he explained: Daniel,* ***I am here to help you understand the vision****. Dan 9:23 God thinks highly of you, and at the very moment you started praying, I was sent to give you the answer*. CEV.

This vision is given to Daniel to be "understood" but it has led to many interpretations, especially verse 27. I will not dwell upon the different views held, but to say a commonly held view is that the final week is split in two and the whole week is moved into the distant future. They say, "it refers to a period of seven years, often interpreted as the tribulation period, during which the Antichrist will make a covenant with Israel, and then break it, leading to the destruction of the temple."

I think that these interpreters split it from the 69 weeks because in their system of interpretation requires it because of their dispensational view which cannot fit it in. I reject this idea. Why on earth would we have a vision of 70 weeks with a gap in it? It is a whole contiguous time period otherwise it would be a vision of 69 weeks and another vision of 1 week. But is it even a literal 70 weeks? Interpreters take the period to be 490 years derived from the 70 weeks, 70 x 7, but I do not find any reason for the 70 prophetic weeks to be turned into a literal 490 years. If God wanted to say it was going to be a period of 490 earth years, He could have said so, but He does not and there is no reason to change the 70 weeks into 490 years how ever tempting and speculative it may be. It is a period of time to Christ, whom the vision is showing and it links with Jeremiah's 70 years is in the number **"70"**.

We like to be sure of dates, and with the help of our magic rear view mirror, we in the 21st century fit the dates to suit our conclusions. Did Daniel have a telescope which looked into the future with the same accuracy, did he think the same things as we do? I am not certain he did, in fact I do not have a complete picture of what is going on because my ability with the language is poor, I am prejudiced by thoughts and interpretations which have crept in over time, and as a precise interpretation is not forthcoming, I am still meditating about it. It might just be that I am thick and do not get it, like lots of others of the Lord's people. So what do I think I know and what am I prepared to say?

Daniel was praying for sin to be removed from the fabric of his nation. We pass over this far too quickly and easily, for this is what he has been praying about so fervently, and this is answered. We are not too interested in this subject of sin and righteousness because we think all of our sins are "washed away with the blood of the lamb" and we are more interested in the intellectual side of "when" this occurs. I don't think Daniel was overly concerned with the future times, he was old and after all, he would be resting with the righteous souls, and the timing of events wouldn't affect him. It was national sin which affected him and was large on his horizon.

Gabriel brought Daniel a message of hope which tied so many of his hopes and prayers together, the answer to what he was looking for, *Dan 9:24 Seventy weeks are shortened upon thy people, and upon thy holy city,* ***that transgression may be finished****, and* ***sin may have an end****, and* ***iniquity may be abolished****; and* ***everlasting justice may be brought****;* ***and vision and prophecy may be fulfilled****; and* ***the Saint of saints may be anointed***. DRB. That is what Daniel was looking for, not some discussion about the "when" of end time prophecies, but rather the "what", the substance, the reality of deliverance. The time seekers would do well to heed Jesus last words on earth to his disciples, *Act 1:6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? Act 1:7 And he said unto them,* ***It is not for you to know the times or the seasons****, which the Father hath put in his own power*.

I feel a little better about my ignorance having heard the words of my Saviour! Just as Daniel was still looking at the prophecy of Jeremiah, *Dan 9:2 In the first year of his (Darius) reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem*. It was only revealed at the end of the 70 years, so I think the true meaning of the 70 weeks, is fully revealed when the time is past.

This passage is difficult, *Dan 9:25 Know thou, therefore, and take notice: that from the going forth of the word, to build up Jerusalem again, unto Christ, the prince, there shall be seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks: and the street shall be built again, and the walls, in straitness of times. Dan 9:26 And after sixty-two weeks Christ shall be slain: and the people that shall deny him shall not be his.*

And a people, with their leader, that shall come, shall destroy the city, and the sanctuary: and the end thereof shall be waste, and after the end of the war the appointed desolation. Dan 9:27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many, in one week: and in the half of the week the victim and the sacrifice shall fail: and there shall be in the temple the abomination of desolation: and the desolation shall continue even to the consummation, and to the end. DRB.

What is the abomination of desolation? Fortunately we have a clue in the Gospels, *Dan 12:11 And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days…….. Mat 24:15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Mat 24:16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains*: It seems that it is an event leading to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (incidentally when no Temple existed on earth in Daniel's day, so this is the hope of a rebuild!).

But for now, Daniel must be content with knowing that Christ will be triumphant, "***that transgression may be finished***, *and* ***sin may have an end***, *and* ***iniquity may be abolished***; *and* ***everlasting justice may be brought***; ***and vision and prophecy may be fulfilled***; *and* ***the Saint of saints may be anointed***". Just how this is to take place is not crystal clear, but it will happen. The question as to whether it happens upon earth or in heaven is not broached. The Lord's people still have a faith which directs them to the law as a means of righteousness, so will they see "the just shall live by faith". But whatever the future leads to, **sin will have an end**!

An assurance is provided in the person of Gabriel who shows Daniel the meaning of the vision. Some years later the appearance of Gabriel to Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus suggests that he again has appeared at a crucial moment in history, to stamp his mark at the point where "the Hope of Israel" enters the world. This was what he had been talking about to Daniel, and it was completed by this baby carried by Mary. The Bible is about Jesus, its not there to satisfy our idle curiosity of the pursuit of numbers.

Daniel lives a good life and a full life, having seen Judah in and out off the captivity. For the 70 years he has not asked anything for himself, but was content to sit in obedience in the shadow of Christ, and his epitaph is, *Dan 12:13 But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days*.

Daniel showed great concern for the church, Israel, and he was anxious for their sin. He does not pray for people that they will have a long life, be spared from reality and the horrors of this world, for the healing and well being of unbelievers, which prayers are soon forgotten, he does not even mention his family, he does not pray trivial prayers, he does not pray for unbelievers to be converted, he does not pray for life, *Mat 6:31 Don't worry and ask yourselves,*

"Will we have anything to eat? Will we have anything to drink? Will we have any clothes to wear?" Mat 6:32 Only people who don't know God are always worrying about such things. Your Father in heaven knows that you need all of these. CEV. He prays for the church that they will repent and get rid of sin. A good example for us in our lives before we attack the world?

Note. The Apocrypha includes another two chapters of Daniel.

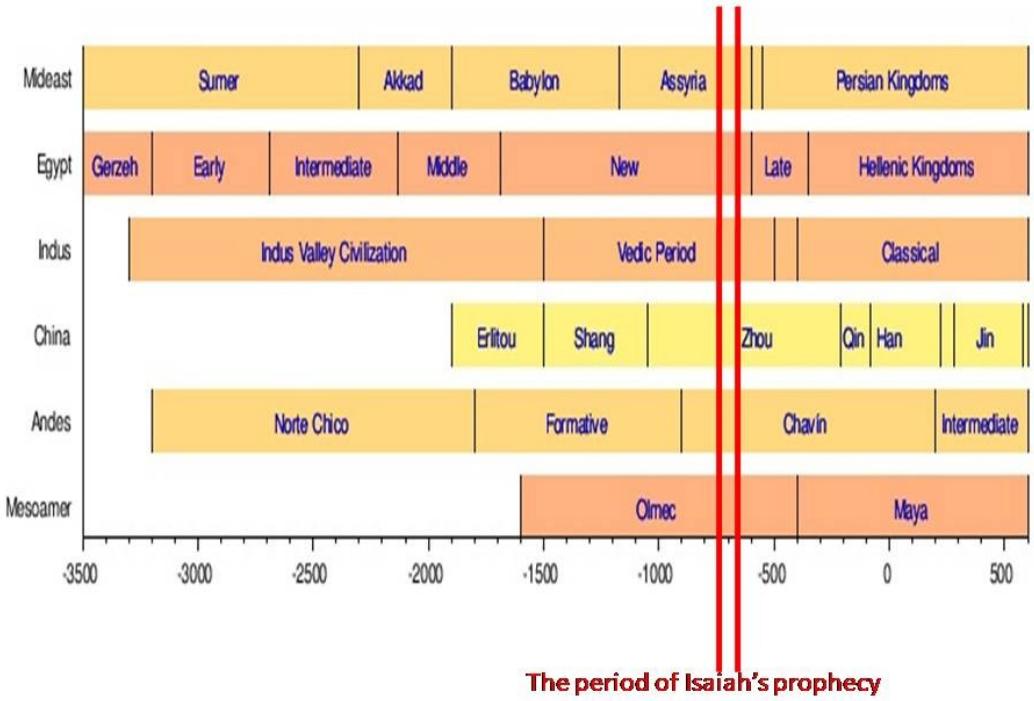
113. The Prophet Isaiah

Preparatory reading: Read or listen to Isaiah (ALL). CEV has an audio version on E-sword.

If you have been through Isaiah at least once you might get a feel for the message that the prophet gives. It will also be useful to start this section with the "life and times" of this great man. If we look at him in the historical setting we see that his ministry covers the period 740 BC to 680 BC, as Rome was being founded by Romulus and the Indus valley society was coming to an end, the Olmecs were flourishing in Meso-America and the forbearers of the Incas were establishing themselves in the Andes, while China was rising.

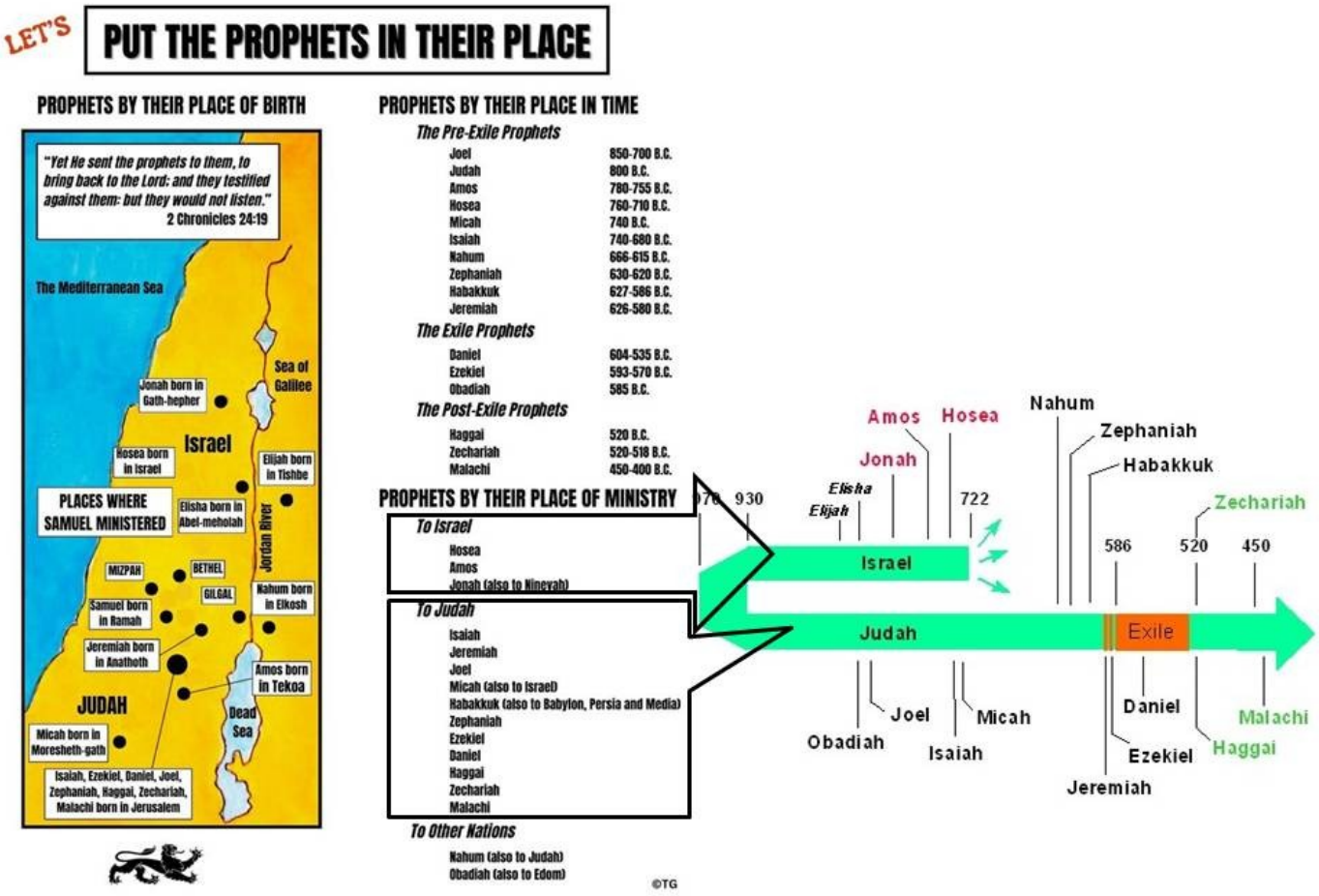
This tiny nation, Israel, a nation inferior in numbers to many of its contempories in the world, would emerge as saviour of the earth, *Isa 49:5 And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israof the el be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength. Isa 49:6* ***And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.*** *Isa 49:7 Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee*.

Isaiah in its Historical setting



Israel had existed as a nation for over a 700 years by the time Isaiah was born and they were on a downward path of apostasy. At first the Lord gave them Judges, and the nation cycled between obedience and apostasy, then came the rejection of God and the establishment of kings to rule over them but this did not work and the nation fractured after king Solomon died, into the southern kindom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Ephraim or Israel as it also was called. To these two factions God at first sent the “speaking” prophets, Shemiah, Iddo, Azariah, Oded, Jehu, Michaiah, Elijah and Elishah. These prohets told the people what to do but left no written account of their prophecies.

These were followed by the writing prophets the first of whom is Jonah, and he prophesied to the nation of gentiles not Israel, at the Assyrian capital of Nineveh. He is followed by Amos, Hosea and Isaiah, called the “latter prophets”.



Isaiah the son of Amos is one of the better known prophets for us Christians, quoting texts, but apart from a string of texts, we don't seem to know much of his work, or even care about it. What Isaiah says, however, is critical to our thinking of Israel and the Messiah, and the future state of Israel as a body. Unfortunately, we have put the Older Testament out of reach of many Christians because it is "Old" and we with our eyes brightly fixed upon the future, only look back occasionally and then to quote Isaiah in support of the Gospels, which are incidentally, Older Testament fulfilments of Messianic prophecies. The Scriptures which we are familiar are,

The Messiah will be born of a Davidic virgin (Is 7:14), will have a Galilean ministry (Is 9:1-2), will be an heir to the throne of David and the Davidic Covenant (Is 9:6/7; 11:1, 10), will have His way prepared (Is 40:3-5), will be spat on and struck (Is 50:6), will be exalted (Is 52:12), will be disfigured by suffering (Is 52:14; 53:2), will be widely rejected (Is 53:1, 3), will bear our sins and sorrows (Is 53:4, 5), God's Spirit will rest on Him (Is 11:2), Gentiles will seek Him (Is 11:10), will make a blood atonement (Is 53:5), will voluntarily accept our guilt and punishment for sin without opening His mouth like a lamb led to slaughter (Is 53:7), will be our substitute (Is 53:6, 8), will bear the sins of many for the sake of their salvation (Is 53:12), will die with transgressors (Is 53:12), will heal the blind, lame, deaf, diseased, broken hearted, and raise the dead (Is 26:19; Is 29:18-19; Is 61:1-2), will be buried in a rich man's tomb (Is 53:9), He will judge the earth with righteousness (Is 11:4, 5).

With our garland of texts around our necks, we are satisfied that we have just about squeezed everything out of Isaiah and so we look no farther. But who is Isaiah writing to? Is it written to all men, irrespective of their standing before God, telling us all about God's future dealings with Judah and Jerusalem, *Isa 1:1 The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw* ***concerning Judah and Jerusalem*** *in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah*. It is a vision "*concerning Judah and Jerusalem*" but who will receive it? More importantly, who will understand it?

In Chapter 6 it says, *Isa 6:9 And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Isa 6:10* ***Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed***. Clearly there were some people who according to this verse, were of Judah and Jerusalem, and they would not understand. It is pointless for some people to hear what they will not understand.

Jesus uses this very same statement to illustrate a point in His ministry, *Mat 13:10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? Mat 13:11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. Mat 13:12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Mat 13:13* ***Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand****. Mat 13:14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith,* ***By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand****; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: Mat 13:15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Mat 13:16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear*.

Quite clearly, Jesus had no intention of telling everybody about His message and for most of them, particularly the Pharisees, it would remain a mystery. He had not come to reveal Himself to everyone or to save everyone. Jesus interprets the parable for the disciples, because without Him, it was not understood any more than it was by the unbeliever, or come to that any man. Sin has drawn a curtain over our understanding of God and what He says, *Rom 3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: Rom 3:11* ***There is none that understandeth****, there is none that seeketh after God. Rom 3:12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one*. It was written, in the very same book that we have before us, *Isa 8:20 To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according*

to this word, ***it is because there is no light in them****. Isa 8:21 And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward*.

It was as true when Isaiah spoke those words as when anyone spoke as of the Lord. The words only had meaning through Jesus*, Joh 1:9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. Joh 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not*. Jesus enlightens mankind and that is the truth and that is why it is utterly pointless thinking that we can illuminate any man by our arguments. They may be a little more educated but they will remain in darkness, and a blind man will not see any better the world, although it be described to him in detail and colour, because he still does not know what colour is unless his eyes are opened, he remains a blind man until Jesus intervenes. It is why it is pointless to argue with an unbeliever, *Mat 7:6 Don't give to dogs what belongs to God. They will only turn and attack you. Don't throw pearls down in front of pigs. They will trample all over them*. CEV. I do not think that the Christian starts arguments with the unbeliever, but they do answer them when questioned.

The populist teachers may be false teachers, *2Ti 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 2Ti 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 2Ti 4:4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables*. But where they ask questions we answer them, *1Pe 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*:

Our task is to make disciples of those who will be discipled, *Mat 28:18 And Jesus coming up spoke to them, saying, All power has been given me in heaven and upon earth. Mat 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; Mat 28:20 teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have enjoined you. And behold, *I* am with you all the days, until the completion of the age*. Darby.

We proclaim the message dogmatically and unapologetically, but we do not set out to be argumentative, and we can only truly address those that God is calling. And how do we know who God is calling? We do not know who He calls, because our task is to be a messenger of the Gospel, not an arbiter of salvation, and we broadcast the seed of God’s word, not knowing how it will germinate. If anyone is saved that is God’s business, and what happens to others is not our business, *Joh 21:21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Joh 21:22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me*.

Having thus laid our argument out, we see that ultimately Isaiah is addressed to the believers, and some will be moved to repentance, the Remnant, but most will not. Some are led to repentance by Isaiah's preaching and others are not, and those who see it as folly have their eyes closed to the truth. Those that repent are the "Remnant" of Israel.

Before we take the view that Israel did, *Deu 9:4 Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee.* ***Deu 9:5 Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out*** *from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Deu 9:6 Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people.* We see that all men are sinners.

The one's who believe and have their eyes opened, the one's who respond to the call for repentance, the Remnant, are not righteous but sinners. Christ is righteous and we only have righteousness by being in Him.

We need to establish the meaning of certain terms that the prophet Isaiah uses in his prophecy and I will start with the word "Remnant".

114. The Remnant. Part 1

Preparatory reading: Isaiah Chapter 11

In the Bible, a remnant refers to a small group of people who remain faithful to God despite widespread unbelief or hardship. They are often described as the survivors of a catastrophe or those who remain loyal amidst widespread apostasy. Among all the people that Isaiah speaks to, among the people God will judge unless they repent, the Remnant, like the rest of mankind are sinners and will be until Jesus comes, *1Jn 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 1Jn 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*. The Remnant are sinners who will be saved.

The words translated remnant in Isaiah mean a survivor or remainder and here it is in a few contexts,

- *Isa 1:9 Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a* ***very small remnant****, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.*

- *Isa 10:20 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the **remnant of Israel**, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.*
- *Isa 11:9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. Isa 11:10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; **to it shall the Gentiles seek**: and his rest shall be glorious. Isa 11:11 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time **to recover the remnant of his people**, **which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the se**a.*
- *Isa 11:16 And there shall be an highway for the **remnant of his people**, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.*
- *Isa 37:31 And **the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah** shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward: Isa 37:32 For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.*
- *Isa 46:3 Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all **the remnant of the house of Israel**, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb:*

This may not seem a very frightening doctrine, but when you consider the implications of it, it becomes much clearer that very few people are in this group, also called the elect, and that is what makes it terrifying. In the days of Noah, in the world before the flood, only 8 people were saved out of the whole population of the world, *1Pe 3:20 Yes, it was Christ, working through the Spirit, who preached to those bound by sin in Noah's day. He was so patient with them, working constantly to reach them as Noah built the ark, yet only eight people responded and had a new life on the other side of that great flood*. Remedy. The ratio of saved to unsaved was very, very small.

It appears now, that the with sins now happening in the world, Noah would only save himself, *Eze 14:12 The word of the LORD came again to me, saying, Eze 14:13 Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it: Eze 14:14 Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD*. It would be one only that was saved!

So what about you "Christian"? Are you one of the thousands that go to church a few times a year, Christmas and Easter, sing hymns, supposedly you came to Christ in an instant and were saved at some rally, occasionally read your bible,

don’t really do bad things, just nod along with what is required of you by the church, and call yourself part of the godly remnant? Who are you kidding?

> The terrible doctrine of the remnant by A.W.Tozer. From a previously unpublished essay and now in “Reclaiming Christianity.” It was read out on our prayer call last night.
> **http://www.box.net/shared/oe47j3glqb**
>
> Rom 9:27 Isaiah also cries concerning Israel, “though the numbers of the sons of Israel is as the sands of the sea, a remnant shall be saved.’ I want to articulate a doctrine in the Bible that is very troubling and alarming. I am very much afraid that the Bible is a more alarming book than we know. Before I explain what I mean, I would like to read the words of a hymn. I love this hymn from Edwin Hodder (1837-1904) about the Word.
>
> The Word is like a garden, Lord
> With flowers bright and fair;
> And everyone who seeks may pluck
> A lovely cluster there.
> Thy Word is like a deep, deep mine;
> And jewels rich and rare
> Are hidden in its mighty depths
> For every searcher there.
> Thy Word is like a starry host;
> A thousand rays of light
> Are seen to guide the traveler
> And make his pathway bright.
> Thy Word is like an armory
> Where soldiers may repair.
> And find, for life’s long battle day
> All needful weapons there.
>
> All of that is true. I enjoy hearing that song and I enjoy singing it. However, I am a little bit afraid that that is the attitude we take toward the Scriptures, that it is a beautiful jewel to wear on or around our neck or our finger, or corsage to wear at some dress up occasion where the star shines on it; that it is fragrant. It is all that. **But it is something more than that,** and in our simple elegance, I am afraid we are not letting the Word of God mean to us what it ought to mean. Whatever the educators may be saying, whatever the current religious vogue may be, here is doctrine clearly taught in the Scripture, which cultists have misread and have wrested to their own destruction. For every cultist says, ”We are the people.” But I refuse to reject the doctrine because somebody else has wrested the doctrine to his or her own destruction. I have neither starry hopes for you to admire nor posies for you to smell; but what I do have is a terrible doctrine that hurt and

bothers and makes me sorrow in spirit. It is the doctrine of the Remnant.

Only a Fragment
What is the doctrine of the Remnant? It is simply this; that in our blind, fallen, sinful world of mankind, at any given time, the vast overwhelming majority is lost. And by lost, I do not mean they have missed their way or come short of the mark or are less that they wanted to be or fail to fulfill their dreams. By lost I mean, alienated from God and an enemy to Him, without pardon, without life, without hope.

What does the doctrine of the Remnant mean? “Remnant” means a small fragment, a surviving trace. It means that some-thing yet remains when the larger body is somewhere else. The Romans 9:27 text deals with Israel, but it sets forth clearly the doctrine as applying to the entire human race as well as the Church. This was true among the nations before Abraham; it was true of Israel after Abraham; and it is true of the Church since Pentecost. I am alarmed because it has been true since Pentecost that such a vast number of people who call themselves Christians-the overwhelming majority-are nominal, and only a remnant are saved.

Look at some of the examples in the Bible. Jesus said, ”And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man (Luke 17:26). According to the Scripture, Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and there were seven other members of his family that were saved out of the whole population. I do not know what the population was, but I know at the time of the flood that there were eight persons saved out of a whole population. And I know that it is written that, as it was in the days of Noah so shall it be in the days of the coming of the Son of man. Somebody says, ”Mr Tozer, your taking it too seriously. Don’t you remember when Elijah felt the way you feel and Elijah said,” Oh Lord, I alone am left,” and God said ” Cheer up, Elijah; I have news for you. Seven thousand are in Israel that have not bowed their knees to Baal nor to his image.” That sounds like a lot. Isn’t that encouraging knowing that in Israel 7000 true Jews did not bow their knees to Baal?

Allow me to indulge in a little speculation. Suppose the population of Israel at the time was 7 million. I think that is a very conservative count. That would mean one tenth of 1 per-cent had not bowed their knee knees to Baal, and all the rest had. It would mean 1 in 1000. If you were to take at that time 1000 Jews, 999 of them secretly bowing the knee to Baal to keep out of trouble, and only one man stood boldly. But suppose for the sake of absolute fairness we cut the population in half, and say there were only 3.5 million. Then the ratio is 1 in 500. Every time you saw a synagogue or a building with 500 Jews reading

the Torah or listening to the chant of the Priests, you had 499 secretly following Baal and 1 was saved. Remember, at Christ's first coming there were only a few that that recognized Him. We take it for granted, just as Israel did, that when Messiah came they would know it.

They believed just what Samson believed when he went to sleep in the lap of Delilah. He believed that he was well set for life and that he had some experience in religion, and therefore there was nothing to worry about. But when he awoke, he found out that he had been captured, and his eyes were soon put out, and he was grinding at the mill and they were making sport of him in the name of a false god. He took himself for granted, which always is a bad and dangerous thing to do.

Either we take ourselves for granted and have a sham peace or we get disturbed and then we pray through and find true peace. Most believers take themselves for granted and have a false peace. If they did what the Bible taught, they would be bothered and alarmed about themselves and would go to God with an open Bible and let the Bible cut them to pieces and put them together again, then give them peace. And the peace they had when they had been chopped to pieces by the Holy Spirit and the Sword of the Spirit, that peace, then, is a legitimate peace.

There are two kinds of tranquility, and do not forget it. Well, maybe there are three kinds now. There's the kind that you buy in bottles, and then there's the kind that you get from taking yourself for granted and believing good things about yourself that is not true. That brings a certain tranquility to the mind.

Then there is the tranquility that comes following a disturbance of the soul that shakes it to its foundations and drives the man or woman to God with an open Bible to cry, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts" (Ps.139:23). Then when God does that, we have an experience with God that gives us tranquility grounded upon the Rock. But with most Evangelical Christians today, their leaders go outside to bring them tranquility.

The tranquilized church

The first offer from the Lord is not tranquility at all. The Lord at first offers us deliverance, forgiveness, renewal and making things right; and following that comes tranquility. But we are marketing tranquility now, selling it like soap, and asking our people in the name of John 3:16 to come and get tranquilized. And so we have tranquilized the Church that is enjoying herself immensely at banquets and times of fun and coffee-klatches and fellowships. Then she is singing about the Lord, "Thy Word is like a Garden Lord." I only call attention to it because there is a danger that we make the Word of God to be

something to give us tranquility. The wings of the churches, the ones that left open all day in the busy sections, you will find people come in and sit down. They do it, as the poet said, ”To invite their souls and call in their thoughts of home and abroad and get still.”

Businessmen and advertising men do that, and mystics from India and from Burma do that. That is not necessarily a Christian thing. It is a good thing, but it is not enough. We gear our services to tranquilize people and paralyze them. We ought to be alarmed by this doctrine of the Remnant. We ought not to allow ourselves to take ourselves for granted. We ought to be alarmed about it. Paul was troubled about this and wrote ”But I keep under my body, and bring into subjection; lest by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor 9:27).

I have known preachers that preached a lifetime and ended up telling dirty stories, ended up being dirty, filthy old men. It is entirely possible for us to teach Bible school and be board members and sing in choirs and take part in church services and then finally find out that we are castaways and have never been of the Remnant at all. That is an alarming thing, but I do not apologize for alarming you. I am afraid that we are not alarmed enough. We ought to be disturbed about this, for it is summed up in the text, ”Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sands of the sea, a remnant shall be saved” (Rom 9:27).

There were a few friends of God during Jesus’ time, but when we think that the population of Jerusalem alone at the time of the Passover was a million, and that at Pentecost there was also a million people in that city but only 3000 were converted, we say ”What a vast harvest that was.” Well 3000 out of 1 million is not a vast harvest in my opinion. I wonder if there has ever been a time when there was a vast harvest. I know it was said of Scottish missionary John G. Paton (1824-1907) that he went to the New Hebrides and found not a Christian, and when he left, there was not a heathen. But I have always crossed my fingers when I read that statement because it is not according to the doctrine of the Remnant. For the doctrine of the Remnant is, ”though the number of the religious people should be as the sands of the sea, only a remnant shall be saved.” It is not that they could not be, it is not that God does not want them to be, it is just that they are not.

When Christ came, there were shepherds and wise-men. And we hear about these friends of God, we are glad for them. But the point is, they were typically a small percentage of the whole. Well then, at the second coming of Jesus, He says, ”And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold” (Matt 24:12). It does not say the love of many only, but every student of Greek will tell the same thing. There is an article, a positive definite article in there: “the.” **The specific**

ability to love shall wax cold. And Jesus said, ”Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8). He did not say that He will not find faith, but He said, “**Shall He** find faith on the earth?” So at the second coming of Christ, it will be as it was in the days of Noah; and in those days, Noah, the eighth person, was saved by water, by the ark. The rest of the population drowned. If you still want more support for the doctrine, read Church history. A small fragment, a surviving trace, always kept the faith while others took things for granted.

Known by their fruit

Do you know what is wrong with us as a Church today? We are taking ourselves for granted. We are assuming that which may not be true at all; that which is founded upon wishful hoping and not upon sound Biblical experience in many cases. We have not been disturbed enough. We have not allowed God to plough furrows on our backs. We have not dared to go before God and have the examination made. We are afraid of what God will find, and we would rather wait. Therefore we have waited and settled down.

There has always been a small remnant and they have been in the midst of all the rest. A million might wish with their lips and worship with their lips, but only a small fragment truly worship in their hearts in a way that honors and pleases God. We do not need to imagine it as an indication of vast spiritual or high degree of holiness when we see a church door open and multitudes spew out on the sidewalk. Follow them home. Follow them a half a block and see how they live. That is the way to tell. “Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them” (Matt 7:20).

Ask them to lead in prayer. Announce a prayer meeting and see how they will leave. Announce a banquet and see how they will come. In the church of God, the ”stop and go” signs are these: When it says **go**, “Banquet”; when it says **stop,** ”prayer meeting.” The church of God follows it and we smile about it, but it is an alarming thing. I do not want to come before the Lord having soothed and petted people into some false sense of smug spiritual security. Read church history and see the fragments, or the remnant, that lived in the midst of it all. Read about the Waldensians and the Friends of God and the Brethren of the Common life and how few there were but how many went to church. It is possible to worship God with our lips and not worship God with our lives. If your life does not worship God, your lips do not worship God either.

I am troubled about all the people I see singing Handel’s Messiah, especially during Easter season, without having the remotest notion of what it is about. They will stand up and sing, “Come unto Him, come

unto Him," and they will not have any idea what it means. When Handle wrote it he said, "When I was through, me thought I saw heaven open and all the angels of God gathered." That is how he felt. But many of us sing it and only enjoy it as music. We can come, sing hymns in church and only enjoy the dignity of the music as a relief from rock 'n' roll. Read about the remnant 600 years before Christ was born in Ezekiel 9:1-6. We say, :begin in the Kremlin, O God begin in the Kremlin and destroy those godless wretches." God says, "Begin at my sanctuary."

We say, "Go to the church where the pastor denies the Bible and had nothing to preach but poetry." God says, "Begin at my Sanctuary." But He says, "Look out for the mark on the forehead." That indelible mark. He sent the man with the linen with an inkhorn, indelible ink, and said, "Go mark them, mark them." Which ones will I mark? The ones that stand and pray the longest? The ones that give the most to missions? " No, no," He says, "that is not the test. Here is the test in a day of corruption: those who sigh and cry for all the abominations that are coming in the midst of Jerusalem."
That is all they have to do. Some things are like a wave on the sea. You can stand, and Paul himself could not shout it back, for it would engulf him. But you do not have to get the mark of the remnant on your forehead, you do not have to succeed, and you do not have to be popular. You only have to sigh and cry for the abominations that are taking place in the earth today. I cannot stop people from doing what they are doing, but at least I can grieve because they will not stop; and I am going to do that. I am going to let my tears water the footsteps of those who go astray. And when the churches will not come back to the New Testament standards and worship the Lord our God in the beauty of Holiness, if I cannot make them do it or persuade them to do it in this awful hour of crisis, at least I can weep because they will not come. And I can sigh if I cannot weep.

I do not know what the future holds. But I know one thing: Rather than betray the sheep of God, rather than lie to them and deceive them and keep them agitated and stirred up with all kinds of popular topics; rather than take my material from Time magazine, I'll preach the Word of God to empty seats and sigh and cry for the abominations that is in the earth.

So God says, "Begin with my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house" (Ezek 9:6). Sounds like these young people are the trouble. These young people are filled lust and wild ideas; but the Scriptures say, begin with the ancient men, which are before the house. "These old bearded pillars of the church,' says the Holy Spirit, begin with them. "And it came to pass, while they were slaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried ,

and said, Ah Lord God! Wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem?" (Ezek 9:8).

If the evangelical church, the fundamentalist believing Church, will not accept this, then I can at least sigh because they will not, and cry to God because they do not.

115. The Remnant. Part 2

Preparatory reading: Isaiah Chapter 11

I do not see many people, so called "Christians", who are very concerned about "sin" in society and among themselves. Last time we saw A W Tozer's take on the remnant, and how little mourning for sin there was, and how few "sigh and cry for the abominations that is in the earth". It is as if we take it for granted that sin has been dealt with and it is no longer a subject for polite society. But there is a more sinister reason that we do not mention sin, and certainly, we do not confront it, and that is because **we are still enslaved to it**.

I would like to grasp some people by the collar and shake them to see if they have any religious passion in them, because they seem like corpses or dispassionate automatons when it comes to our faith. They don't react with any passion or conviction to what is being presented to them, *Rev 3:15 I know everything you have done, and you are not cold or hot. I wish you were either one or the other. Rev 3:16 But since you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spit you out of my mouth.* CEV. I don't see many Christians being concerned with sin unless it is other people's sin, but not their own.

Listen to what Malachi says, *Mal 3:16 Then they that feared Jehovah spoke often one to another; and Jehovah observed it , and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared Jehovah, and that thought upon his name. Mal 3:17 And they shall be unto me a peculiar treasure, saith Jehovah of hosts, in the day that I prepare; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him*. Darby. Is that you? Do you speak often, whenever you get a chance? Is that what you do in front of your acquaintances, your family, your children, your friends, or do they dictate the course of your conversation, and do you go willingly with them in their vanity?

Look at what Ezekiel says, *Eze 6:8 Yet will I **leave a remnant**, that ye may have some that shall escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries. Eze 6:9 And they that escape of **you shall remember me among the nations** whither they shall be carried captives, because I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a whoring after their idols: and they shall lothe themselves for*

the evils which they have committed in all their abominations. The Remnant, remember, call to mind the sins of the past, the idolatry, the evils they have done, the abominations, they remember, and they hate it.

Well, you can deceive yourself that all is well when it is not, and that is the point about the Remnant. We say to ourselves, “all is well” because we are surrounded by hundreds of like minds, and we think, “they can’t all be wrong”, and we forget that they mostly are all wrong, because only a few are saved, and only a Remnant is called.

Do you see in the verses from Isaiah 11 verse 9, that this remnant from “Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea” are the same people who receive the Holy Spirit, *Act 2:9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Act 2:10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Act 2:11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God*.

While the Remnant is declared to be the “house of Israel”, and the “house of Judah”, it must eventually include the Gentiles as well as those scattered abroad, *Rom 9:27 Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: Rom 9:28 For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. Rom 9:29 And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.*

What is the Remnant? I will illustrate this by looking at the church history over the last 400 years or so. This is quite arbitrary, but it will serve our purpose, and I am using the “church” instead of the Jews. There were many people who called themselves “Christians” in the time of James 6th, Charles 1st and Oliver Cromwell, and these people were included in the “church”, and compulsory attendance made a fine living for many vicars. Many people of divergent views held that they were “Christian” and no doubt many were, but many were not and did not believe, for their lives showed that fact, so many of the people that were alive then died in unbelief. Along came another generation at the time of the Restoration of the Monarchy, when

Puritanism was put aside in favour of liberalism, and the population reverted to extravagant worldliness and “Christianity” although acknowledged was not held with much conviction, and most of that generation died in unbelief.

Another generation arises and found religious persecution under the state church, which led to a decline in the faith and they too died, many in unbelief. Wesley and Whitfield preached to a new generation many of whom repented and this generation died. The Enlightenment, so called, followed, and many of that generation perished in the unbelief that they had generated, followed by revival and then the “downgrade” in mid-Victorian England where another generation fell, due to unbelief of “Higher Criticism”. Sporadic revivals saved some of the coming generations, amidst the unbelief that generally prevailed until we come to the current age of disbelief and the caricature of Christianity that it bears, with even more generations dying in their unbelief.

Now do you see what happened? People continued to die in their sin, in every generation there were new souls who eventually perished, for the 400 years that we are dealing with, men rejected Christ and His teaching, generation after generation. Countless thousand did not go to be with the Christ of the Bible, because they did not believe in Christ or the Bible, *Rom 9:32 Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; Rom 9:33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed*.

The Remnant are the few believers in any age, and they are the saved, *Isa 1:8 And* ***the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city****. Isa 1:9* ***Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah****. Isa 1:10 Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. Isa 1:11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats*. Paul interprets this as, *Rom 9:27 And this is what the prophet Isaiah said about the people of Israel, "****The people of Israel are as many as the grains of sand along the beach. But only a few who are left will be saved.*** *Rom 9:28 The Lord will be quick and sure to do on earth what he has warned he will do." Rom 9:29 Isaiah also said, "If the Lord All-Powerful had not spared some of our descendants, we would have been destroyed like the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah."* CEV.

But do not think for a moment that this Remnant will be spared the tribulation and sufferings of this life just because they are a Remnant, *Rev 6:9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: Rev 6:10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not*

judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? Rev 6:11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. The Remnant are not given any special privileges in this life, only in the next life. For example, Daniel, and his companions were sent into exile when Nebuchadnezzar came for king Jehoiachim, the righteous suffering with the godless.

Are all men welcome into Jesus heavenly home having killed the homeowner, *Mat 21:37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. Mat 21:38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. Mat 21:39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. Mat 21:40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? Mat 21:41 They say unto him,* ***He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons****. Mat 21:42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?*

Can we say that all of the Jews in the New Testament were part of that Remnant? No we cannot, *Act 7:51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Act 7:52 Which of the prophets have not your father's persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Act 7:53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it. Act 7:54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth*. Only the believing Jews were part of that Remnant, and they became known as Christians, and the resulting distinction between Jew and Gentile, Jew and Christian was lost forever, except in the minds of dispensationalists!

Any attempt to explain the restoration of Israel as a majority of Jews given a second chance after death is violating scripture and to say that practicing Jews will be converted en-masse, at the end of time, is to violate the scriptures which say, *Gal 3:28 There is* ***neither Jew nor Greek****, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. Gal 3:29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.....Col 3:11 Where there is* ***neither Greek nor Jew****, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all*. To restore the Jew to a position of favour is to deny Christ, put Christ aside and make the Jew king in place of Christ.

The Bible teaches that we only get one shot at life,

- *Pro 11:7 When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth.*

- *Pro 11:7 When the wicked die, their hopes die with them. CEV.*
- *Pro 11:7 When the wicked die, all their hopes are lost; everything they thought they could do comes to nothing. ERV.*

We either take the offer or refuse it and take the consequences.

Sitting comfortably in our little denominations of our choosing, we recline, because there's no point in doing anything, after all, it does say, *Luk 21:24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*. The interpretation of the "time of the gentiles" is open to question! But many have given up the fight seeing it as a losing battle.

They do not see the Old Testament as an example of the believers fight against sin, *1Co 10:5 But most of them did not please God. So they died, and their bodies were scattered all over the desert. 1Co 10:6* ***What happened to them is a warning to keep us from wanting to do the same evil things****. 1Co 10:7 They worshiped idols, just as the Scriptures say, "The people sat down to eat and drink. Then they got up to dance around." So don't worship idols. 1Co 10:8 Some of those people did shameful things, and in a single day about twenty-three thousand of them died. Don't do shameful things as they did. 1Co 10:9 And don't try to test Christ, as some of them did and were later bitten by poisonous snakes. 1Co 10:10 Don't even grumble, as some of them did and were killed by the destroying angel. 1Co 10:11 These things happened to them as a warning to us. All this was written in the Scriptures to teach us who live in these last days*. CEV.

I am not muck raking when I use these illustrations but giving you a warning, that church leaders do not all seem part of the Remnant,

- When Mr. Zacharias died of cancer on the 19th May 2020, at age 74, he was one of the most revered evangelists in the United States. Former Vice President Mike Pence spoke at his memorial service in Atlanta, calling him "a man of faith who could rightly handle the word of truth like few others in our time" and comparing him to Billy Graham and C.S. Lewis. The secret of Zacharias's abuse started to unravel the day of his funeral in May 2020. One of the massage therapists he groped, masturbated in front of, and asked for sexually explicit images watched in shock as the apologist was honoured and celebrated on a livestream. Famous people, including Vice President Mike Pence and Christian football star Tim Tebow, spoke of Zacharias in glowing terms.

- Evangelical pastor Ted Haggard ranted against the evils of premarital sex, adultery, and gay marriage. That is, until he was caught in a sex scandal in 2006. A male escort named Mike Jones publicly claimed that Haggard had been a client for years. Not only that, Haggard had allegedly used crystal meth in front of his male lover. Haggard was

forced to resign from his church. Following his downfall, he attempted a form of conversion therapy. His wife stood by Haggard during the scandal.

- Jim Bakker was perhaps the most popular televangelist in the 1980s, though his wife Tammy Faye gave him a run for his money. That all ended when Bakker was brought down by a scandal that included sexual abuse and fraud. In 1987, Bakker's secretary publicly accused the televangelist of raping and drugging her. After Bakker resigned from his ministry, he was charged with accounting fraud and sentenced to 45 years in prison. Bakker was replaced by Jerry Falwell, who called his predecessor "the greatest scab and cancer on the face of Christianity in 2,000 years of church history."

- Tony Alamo rocketed to fame in the 1970s for preaching a fundamentalist interpretation of Christianity. After his wife died in 1982, he displayed her embalmed body for months and claimed she would rise from the dead. In 2009, Alamo was sentenced to 175 years in prison. The charges included sexual abuse, transporting underage girls across state lines for sexual purposes, pedophilia, marrying an eight-year-old girl, and child rape. Alamo's defense: he was framed by the Vatican.

- Bob Coy was the most famous evangelical pastor in Florida. His Fort Lauderdale megachurch had 25,000 members, and George W. Bush even visited Coy. But it all came crashing down in 2014 when he admitted to multiple affairs and a pornography addiction. He resigned in disgrace. In 2017, Coy was publicly accused of molesting a four-year-old child. Police sat on the accusation for months and dropped the inquiry without interviewing Coy. The case is unresolved.

- Jimmy Swaggart, a Pentecostal televangelist, got his start on television in 1975. In the 1980s, he teamed up with Reverend Jerry Falwell, Reverend James Robison, and Reverend Pat Robertson to use the Christian Right to shape the Republican party. Satan's agents are everywhere, according to Swaggart, and include feminists, Democrats, and rock musicians. In 1988, it became public that Swaggart was cheating on his wife with a New Orleans sex worker. Not only that, Swaggart was an avid consumer of porn and experimented with BDSM, all while condemning such "immoral" acts.

Do you think that we will find those men in heaven? And what of their followers?

Sexual sins seem to make up a large part of the list that I gave, but there are plenty of other sins, *Eph 5:3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Eph 5:4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient:*

but rather giving of thanks. Eph 5:5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, ***hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ*** *and of God……..Gal 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Gal 5:20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Gal 5:21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past,* ***that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God****.*

"Committing your life to Christ" is seen as a golden ticket, a "get out of jail free" card, so that if you do commit those sins, its all right, because you have been forgiven and they don't apply to you. Really? They are acts of treachery against Christ, and it says that there is NO inheritance for us in the kingdom of Christ if we do such things. Well you may want to risk it, but I do not.

We believers are the Remnant who will have the Lord reign over us, *Mic 4:6 In that day, saith the LORD, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; Mic 4:7 And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever*.

We, the Remnant, make war with the devil, *Rev 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to* ***make war with the remnant of her seed****, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ*. As this creation moves to its end, the only ones fighting satan are the Remnant, for the whole world lies in sin, *1Jn 5:19 And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness*.

116. The Kingdom

Preparatory reading: Isaiah Chapter 9

Another term which we must understand when reading Isaiah is "The Kingdom", *Isa 9:7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David,* ***and upon his kingdom****, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this*. Is this an earthly or heavenly kingdom?

In broad terms a monarch is the ruler of a country, state, or territory which is called a kingdom, but could equally be a queendom. It is important to see that originally Israel was a kingdom under God, a Theocratic kingdom, an earthly kingdom, at least that was the theory. Stephen in his summary of the Old Testament says otherwise,

Act 7:37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. Act 7:38 This is he, that was in ***the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us: Act 7:39 To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt****, Act 7:40 Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. Act 7:41 And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands*.

They had turned their back on God at a very early stage of entering the land, but God still conceded to live with them, *Act 7:47 But Solomon built him an house. Act 7:48 Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Act 7:49 Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? Act 7:50 Hath not my hand made all these things?* God was their king in theory but their hearts were far from Him, *Deu 33:4 I called a meeting of the tribes of Israel and gave you God's Law. Deu 33:5* ***Then you and your leaders made the LORD your king****.* CEV.

Everything that God had shown them (in the mount) was the ideal for worship, the hypothetical worship, but it was theoretical and I doubt that the true principals of the worship of God were closely followed at all. Take the incident at the time of king Josiah which seems to sum up the attitude, *2Ki 22:8 While Shaphan was at the temple, Hilkiah handed him a book and said, "****Look what I found here in the temple—The Book of God's Law****." Shaphan read it, 2Ki 22:9 then went back to Josiah and reported, "Your officials collected the money in the temple and gave it to the men supervising the repairs. 2Ki 22:10 But there's something else, Your Majesty. The priest Hilkiah gave me this book." Then Shaphan read it out loud. 2Ki 22:11 When Josiah heard what was in The Book of God's Law, he tore his clothes in sorrow. 2Ki 22:12 At once he called together Hilkiah, Shaphan, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Achbor son of Micaiah, and his own servant Asaiah. He said, 2Ki 22:13 "The LORD must be furious with me and everyone else in Judah****, because our ancestors did not obey the laws written in this book****. Go find out what the LORD wants us to do."* CEV.

There they were, the priest and the scribe, collecting the money from the simple souls, and all the while the Law of the Lord was hidden in a dark corner of the Treasury and they did not know that and they did not know what it meant. Doesn't that remind you of many of the "churches" today? They collect your money and repay you back with their own ignorance of true religion. What do you get for it? A run down money pit of a building which you are always repairing and the sum and substance of religion is as lost on you, as it is your leaders. This had been going on for generations as Josiah observed, "***because our ancestors did not obey the laws written in this book****. Go find out what the LORD wants us to do"*.

It was just too late for dear Josiah, *2Ki 22:16 "Josiah, I am the LORD! And I will see to it that this country and everyone living in it will be destroyed. It will happen just as this book says. 2Ki 22:17* ***The people of Judah have rejected me. They have offered sacrifices to foreign gods and have worshiped their own idols****. I cannot stand it any longer. I am furious. 2Ki 22:18 "Josiah, listen to what I am going to do. 2Ki 22:19 I noticed how sad you were when you read that this country and its people would be completely wiped out. You even tore your clothes in sorrow, and I heard you cry. 2Ki 22:20* ***So I will let you die in peace, before I destroy this place****." The men left and took Huldah's answer back to Josiah*. CEV.

I believe that Josiah was among the expendable Remnant who were delivered by God. Many of the Remnant must have been delivered at this time as many repented and celebrated the feasts of the Lord, but it was too late for the nation and Judgement was coming. Although Josiah was told he would die in peace, peace did not mean a painless death, *2Ch 35:20 Sometime later, King Neco of Egypt led his army to the city of Carchemish on the Euphrates River. And Josiah led his troops north to meet the Egyptians in battle. 2Ch 35:21 Neco sent the following message to Josiah: I'm not attacking you, king of Judah! We're not even at war. But God has told me to quickly attack my enemy. God is on my side, so if you try to stop me, he will punish you. 2Ch 35:22 But Josiah ignored Neco's warning, even though it came from God! Instead, he disguised himself and marched into battle against Neco in the valley near Megiddo. 2Ch 35:23 During the battle an Egyptian soldier shot Josiah with an arrow. Josiah told his servants, "Get me out of here! I've been hit." 2Ch 35:24 They carried Josiah out of his chariot, then put him in the other chariot he had there and took him back to Jerusalem, where he soon died. He was buried beside his ancestors, and everyone in Judah and Jerusalem mourned his death. 2Ch 35:25 Jeremiah the prophet wrote a funeral song in honour of Josiah. And since then, anyone in Judah who mourns the death of Josiah sings that song. It is included in the collection of funeral song*s. CEV.

I have suggested that Israel was half-hearted at best in serving and following the Lord, but the nation kept Him as their king for 400 years, from the Exodus until the time of Samuel. The people thought however it best to have an earthly king just like the other nations. They wouldn't look out of place in the world. They wouldn't appear much different to other people, but they did not realise that it would cost them. They had overthrown Elohim in favour of man, *1Sa 8:6 But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said,* ***Give us a king to judge us****. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. 1Sa 8:7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee,* ***but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them****. 1Sa 8:8 According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.* It is like the rejection of that other great king, "We will not have this *man* to reign over us".

The choice of an earthly monarch would bring with it earthly burdens, *1Sa 8:10 And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king. 1Sa 8:11 And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. 1Sa 8:12 And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. 1Sa 8:13 And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. 1Sa 8:14 And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. 1Sa 8:15 And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. 1Sa 8:16 And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. 1Sa 8:17 He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. 1Sa 8:18 And ye* ***shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day***.

The people were far better off under God. He was not a burden on the people, He was a source of their welfare and sustenance, but they knew better or thought they did. The taxation that occurred in Solomon's reign was the last straw, and you will recall that the burden of taxation fell on all of the tribes, except Judah, Solomon's tribe. This enlightened self-interest of Solomon, paved the way for the revolt where 10 tribes went off with Jeroboam and one was left with Rehoboam, Solomon's son. The self interest of the kings of men was already showing itself within two generations.

I have no recollection of Israel giving the throne back to God! I have no recollection that God offered to take the throne back from man, to have an earthly kingdom. It was now the earthly king who had usurped God and the earthly kingdom of Israel was in man's control. The heavenly kingdom was still God's and that was the kingdom of God and these two kingdoms would be in conflict. Never again did the kingdom of God fall into man's hands and never again was God king over the earthly nation but the disappearance was only until Christ came and the kingdom of God was re-established, *Mar 1:14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, Mar 1:15 And saying,* ***The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God*** *is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel*.

This is not the earthly kingdom of Israel, this is Gods kingdom. The idea, long ingrained in the nation that Israel were the "chosen people", *Deu 14:2 Out of all the nations on this earth, the LORD your God chose you to be his own. You belong to the LORD, so don't behave like those who worship other gods.* CEV. This choice of Israel, the earthly nation was not without its rules, *Deu 7:6 For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face*

of the earth. Deu 7:7 The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: Deu 7:8 But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Deu 7:9 Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; Deu 7:10 And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face. Deu 7:11 Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them. Deu 7:12 Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, ***that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers****:*

If earthly Israel had strict rules for its kingdom, then the heavenly kingdom had strict rules for its citizens. The kingdom above, the kingdom of heaven, had much stricter rules for entrance, *Mat 7:13 Go in through the narrow gate. The gate to destruction is wide, and the road that leads there is easy to follow. A lot of people go through that gate. Mat 7:14 But the gate to life is very narrow. The road that leads there is so hard to follow that only a few people find it*. CEV.

God reveals the kingdom under Christ, *Mat 2:1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Mat 2:2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him*. But there is something strange about this kingdom, His kingdom is not of this world, *Joh 18:36 Jesus answered,* ***My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight****, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Joh 18:37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice*.

At the time of Samuel, most people rejected Elohim as their king, in favour of man, but did this really stop Him from being King? Earthly Israel was just another enemy to fight, another kingdom of man that He would have to subdue, *Rev 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. Rev 19:12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. Rev 19:13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. Rev 19:14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. Rev 19:15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he*

shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. Rev 19:16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

Every knee, every kingdom shall bow to Him. The Israelites had an opportunity to be part of the heavenly King's army, but they refused. This means there are two kingdoms, the kingdoms of this world and the kingdom of heaven. The Remnant shall see through this, they shall see a great light in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death, *Isa 8:18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which* ***dwelleth in mount Zion****. Isa 8:19 And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? Isa 8:20 To the law and to the testimony:* ***if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them****. Isa 8:21 And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward. Isa 8:22 And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness. Isa 9:1 Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. Isa 9:2* ***The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined****.*

From this darkness emerges the King's son, who takes the throne of David and heralds in His everlasting kingdom, *Isa 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Isa 9:7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and* ***upon his kingdom****, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.*

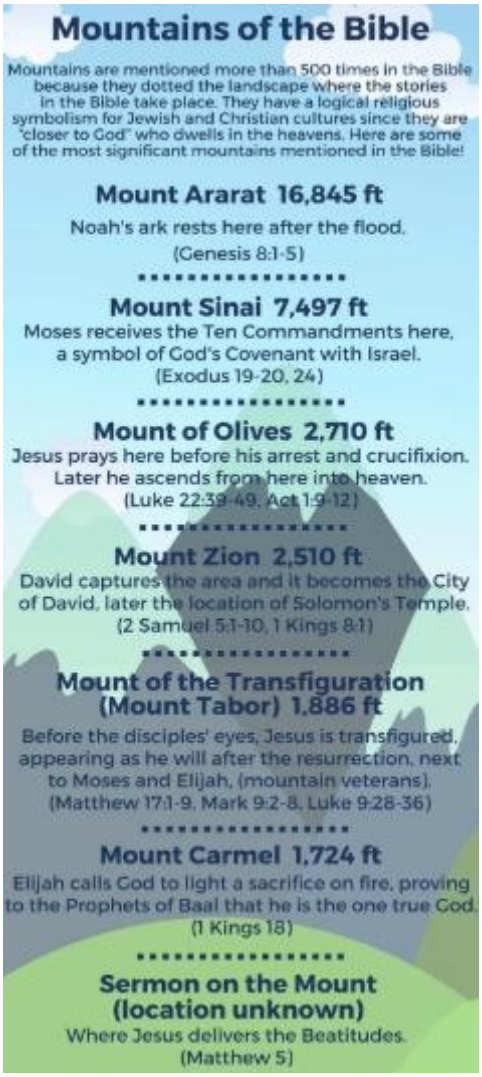
Next I will look at the word "Mountain".

117. The Mountain

Preparatory reading: Genesis Chapter 8 verses 1 - 5

Another word which we need to clarify is "Mountain". Mountains have a specific significance in the Bible because they are associated with God, spirituality, and encounters with God. They are also symbolic of stability, power, and permanence. The mountains are always there at historic moments and I will go

back to a study that we did, “Christ the Creator”, Chapter 29 Noah’s Ark and the Temple part 1, page 124,


Mountains of the Bible
Mountains are mentioned more than 500 times in the Bible because they dotted the landscape where the stories in the Bible take place. They have a logical religious symbolism for Jewish and Christian cultures since they are "closer to God" who dwells in the heavens. Here are some of the most significant mountains mentioned in the Bible!
Mount Ararat 16,845 ft
Noah's ark rests here after the flood.
(Genesis 8:1-5)
Mount Sinai 7,497 ft
Moses receives the Ten Commandments here, a symbol of God's Covenant with Israel.
(Exodus 19-20, 24)
Mount of Olives 2,710 ft
Jesus prays here before his arrest and crucifixion. Later he ascends from here into heaven.
(Luke 22:39-49, Act 1:9-12)
Mount Zion 2,510 ft
David captures the area and it becomes the City of David, later the location of Solomon's Temple.
(2 Samuel 5:1-10, 1 Kings 8:1)
Mount of the Transfiguration (Mount Tabor) 1,886 ft
Before the disciples' eyes, Jesus is transfigured, appearing as he will after the resurrection, next to Moses and Elijah, (mountain veterans).
(Matthew 17:1-9, Mark 9:2-8, Luke 9:28-36)
Mount Carmel 1,724 ft
Elijah calls God to light a sacrifice on fire, proving to the Prophets of Baal that he is the one true God.
(1 Kings 18)
Sermon on the Mount (location unknown)
Where Jesus delivers the Beatitudes.
(Matthew 5)

The measurements between the Ark of Noah, the Tabernacle, the Temple of Solomon, the Temple of Ezekiel and the Temple in Revelation, all show some commonalities. The three floors of the Ark I take to be of the same height, 10 cubits, the same height as the Tabernacle of Moses. The Holy of Holies is 10 x 10 cubits and the Holy place 10 x 20 cubits, so 30 cubits altogether for the Tabernacle.

In the Temple Solomon built, it was as high as the Ark, three times the height of the Tabernacle, and twice as wide as the Tabernacle but the same length. 30 x 30 x 20 cubits, *1Ki 6:2 And the house which king Solomon built for the LORD, the* ***length thereof was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof twenty cubits, and the height thereof thirty cubits****. 1Ki 6:3 And the porch before the temple of the house, twenty cubits was the length thereof, according to the breadth of the house; and ten cubits was the breadth thereof before the house. 1Ki 6:4 And for the house he made windows of narrow lights……. 1Ki 6:10 And then he built chambers against all the house, five cubits high: and they rested on the house with timber of cedar*.

These measurements show that there is a unity between the objects, and that they all have the same purpose, though constructed at different times in history. I want to look at the similarities between the Ark of Noah and Solomon’s Temple.

Another great similarity is that they all exist on a mountain, *Gen 8:4 And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon* ***the mountains*** *of Ararat*. The Tabernacle was built from a pattern revealed in a mountain, *Exo 25:40 And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in* ***the mount****, and* Jesus is transfigured on a mountain, *Mat*

*17:1 And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an **high mountain** apart, Mat 17:2 And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light*. Jesus was talking about His Exodus.

Isaiah says, *Isa 2:2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the **mountain** of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. Isa 2:3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the **mountain** of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem*.

God speaks of mountains in Isaiah and in particular one which is designated "**Holy Mountain**", *Isa 11:9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my **holy mountain**: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea*. It is the first time that "**Holy Mountain**" is used in Scripture to describe God's dwelling place, "*my holy mountain*".

The phrase is used a number of times in Isaiah,

- *Isa 56:7 Even them will I bring to my **holy mountain**, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.*
- *Isa 57:13 When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee; but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them: but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my **holy mountain**;*
- *Isa 65:11 But ye are they that forsake the LORD, that forget my **holy mountain**, that prepare a table for that troop, and that furnish the drink offering unto that number.*
- *Isa 65:25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my **holy mountain**, saith the LORD.*
- *Isa 66:20 And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the LORD out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my **holy mountain** Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD.*

Isaiah sets the context of the Holy Mountain, *Isa 56:4 For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Isa 56:5 Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls **a place and a name** better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an **everlasting name**, that shall not be cut off. Isa 56:6 Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; Isa 56:7 Even them will I bring*

*to **my holy mountain**, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. Isa 56:8 The Lord GOD which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him*.

The Lord gives “a place and a name”, Yad vaShem”, an everlasting name, to the “eunuchs that keep my Sabbath” and to everyone that keeps the Sabbath and Covenant of Jehovah. He takes the excluded people and exalts them and brings them to His Holy Mountain. Jesus uses this Scripture when He purges the Temple, *Mat 21:12 And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, Mat 21:13 And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. Mat 21:14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them*.

Now think for a minute. If Jesus had intended the earthly Jerusalem on Mount Zion and the Temple of Herod, to be the place spoken of in Isaiah, then Jesus only spoke of this happening for a very small time duration, because the earthly Temple was about to be destroyed by the Romans. If however, as I think, the Lord had a distant view in mind, beyond this life, the passage looks to the earth (Herod’s Temple) and then looks to the heavens (the Lord’s Temple). Again we see, “first the earthly and then the heavenly” as a fulfilment of this prophecy of Isaiah Chapter 56.

The figure of Jerusalem as the Holy Mountain and the Temple, is a vision of heaven, what exists in heaven. God told Solomon to build the Temple at Jerusalem according to the pattern, *1Ch 28:19 All this, said David, the LORD made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern*, and Moses built, *Exo 25:9 According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it…… Exo 25:40 And look that thou make them after their pattern, **which was shewed thee in the mount***. Where was the pattern, the Divine plan kept, and what did the pattern signify?

God was showing the people on earth a “Temple” and that was what they built, but it had its reality elsewhere, because that earthly Temple was an imperfect attempt to portray what already existed in Heaven, the heavenly Temple. God was bringing heaven and the contents of the heavenly kingdom down to earth so the man could appreciate the beauty and variation of the mysteries of His kingdom. The term “heaven” gives us not a clue as to what exists in it, so by the Grace of God, He determined to show us what it was like, and the Ark of Noah was the first revelation, the Tabernacle was the second revelation of heaven, the Temple of Solomon was the third revelation and Christ Jesus was the final revelation.

Ezekiel, prophesying at the time of the captivity has a vision of a Temple, *Eze 40:2 In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south. Eze 40:3 And he brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate. Eze 40:4 And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall shew thee; for to the intent that I might shew them unto thee art thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel*. Why is he shown the Temple at this point in history if not to encourage the exiles? Further it is not a Temple he is told to build but one that already exists, *Heb 11:9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: Heb 11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations,* ***whose builder and maker is God****.* Ezekiel too has a vision similar to Isaiah.

Jesus came to earth to take us to heaven. In heaven He reveals His grand majesty, leaving the earth and entering His Glory, *Luk 24:25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Luk 24:26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to* ***enter into his glory****? Luk 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.* What was in Heaven? It was Jesus Christ, *Rev 21:22 And I saw* ***no temple*** *therein: for* ***the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it****. Rev 21:23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and* ***the Lamb is the light thereof****. Rev 21:24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. Rev 21:25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. Rev 21:26 And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. Rev 21:27 And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life*. The people were being shown a vision of the Temple in Heaven until they were fit to see the actual reality, Christ.

Isaiah Chapter 11 is a Messianic passage in which the term “Holy Mountain” first occurs, and the vision is repeated at the close of Isaiah, *Isa 65:17* ***For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind****. Isa 65:18 But be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. Isa 65:19 And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. Isa 65:20 There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. Isa 65:21 And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. Isa 65:22 They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant,*

and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. Isa 65:23 They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. Isa 65:24 And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. Isa 65:25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. ***They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD***.

The Holy Mountain is the place where God fulfils His promise to the Remnant, *Isa 11:16 And there shall be an highway for* ***the remnant of his people****, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt*.

The mountain of God is where the people look for redemption, Isa 25:6 And **in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things**, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. Isa 25:7 And he will ***destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people***, and the vail that is spread over all nations. Isa 25:8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken *it.* Isa 25:9 And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this *is* our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this *is* the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. Isa 25:10 **For in this mountain shall the hand of the LORD rest**, and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill. Isa 25:11 And he shall spread forth his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth *his hands* to swim: and he shall bring down their pride together with the spoils of their hands. Isa 25:12 And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall he bring down, lay low, *and* bring to the ground, *even* to the dust.

The next term I want to look at is “saviour”. Why did the nation need a saviour, and was it a saviour for other peoples, and was it a saviour of the soul?

118. The Saviour

Preparatory reading: Isaiah Chapter 43

I think that we miss out a lot on the depth of meaning in the Bible by not having some knowledge of the language. Christians will tell you that it is not necessary to know the original language since the translations are so good, but I think that this is complacent laziness on their part, because in this, they find an excuse for

not studying God's word, and they reduce it to just learning a series of texts, and that is as far as they go.

Hearing the original Hebrew for the word "saviour", yasha, if we were one of those ancient people, would have immediately stirred in us thoughts of Joshua. The word "saviour" which comes from the Hebrew **יָשַׁע** = yasha, which is compounded in the name (Joshua**יְהוֹשׁוּעַ** Jehovah-saved). This is the same name as Jesus, *Mat 1:21 "And she shall give birth to a Son, and you shall call His Name* **יהושע** *= Joshua for He shall* ***save*** *His people from their sins."* **Footnote: This is the meaning of the Hebrew of His Name**. TS2009. Joshua and Jesus are the same and it is a shame that we do not have one or the other for consistency in our translations.

Stephen calls Joshua, Jesus, *Act 7:44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen. Act 7:45 Which also our fathers that came after brought in with* ***Jesus*** *into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David; Act 7:46 Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob*.

Dr Gill Comments,

> **brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles**; that is, they having received the tabernacle from their fathers, brought it into the land of Canaan, which was possessed by the Gentiles, when they entered into it with Joshua their leader, and captain, at the head of them; who is here called Jesus, as he is in *Heb 4:8 For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day*, for Joshua and Jesus are the same name, and signify a saviour; for such an one Joshua was to the people of Israel; and was an eminent type of Jesus Christ, the captain of our salvation, in his bringing many sons to glory:

See how much a word can reveal, as its layers are removed and more opens up to us. I hope that you will be encouraged to search the scriptures more diligently and be enriched, but if you choose to be wilfully ignorant there is nothing I can do.

יָשַׁע = yasha, saviour, occurs in the following contexts in Isaiah,

- *Isa 19:20 And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the LORD because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them.*
- *Isa 43:3 For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.*
- *Isa 43:11 I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.*

- *Isa 45:15 Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.*
- *Isa 45:21 Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.*
- *Isa 49:26 And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.*
- *Isa 60:16 Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings: and thou shalt know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.*
- *Isa 63:8 For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour.*

The first of these quotations is interesting because it occurs in a speech to the Egyptians, An Oracle Concerning Egypt. It appears to say that although Egypt sinned against God, none the less, He would "smite it and heal it", *Isa 19:20 And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the LORD because of the oppressors, and he shall send them* ***a saviour****, and a great one, and he shall deliver them. Isa 19:21 And the LORD shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the LORD in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the LORD, and perform it. Isa 19:22 And the LORD shall smite Egypt:* ***he shall smite and heal it****: and they shall return even to the LORD, and he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them. Isa 19:23 In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. Isa 19:24 In that day shall* ***Israel*** *be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: Isa 19:25 Whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance*

A saviour, a great one, would deliver Egypt, along with Assyria, and Israel. It was not just Israel who would benefit from the Lord's mercy, it was other nations too. Many Christians have a very blinkered view of salvation, and like the Jews under the first covenant, it was considered the favoured nation, and that came to be the only nation. Christians are exhorted to enter in by the straight or narrow gate and having done this, they proceed to put all manner of obstacles in the gateway to stop others entering, like the Pharisees before them, *Mat 23:13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in*. The Saviour would be more generous and save many nations.

Why should we need saving, and from what? It is quite specific, *Mat 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall* ***save his people from their sins***. This verse hardly impacts upon mankind. They turn

around to you and say, “I don’t need saving, there’s nothing wrong with me, how dare you suggest that I’m a sinner”, and off they go in a huff, offended that you should ever think that their pristine lives contained the slightest trace of sin. And you the righteous Christian have been left high and dry, with little chance of a serious talk to the person again.

I know that sin is the most important thing that you can speak to the human heart about but there is a line that divides all men, *Mar 2:15 And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him. Mar 2:16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? Mar 2:17 When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*.

Before we start talking about “sin” we need to set out our stall with the whole background of mankind. As disciples we do as Jesus tells us, *Mat 28:18 Jesus came to them and said: I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth! Mat 28:19 Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Mat 28:20 and teach them to do everything I have told you. I will be with you always, even until the end of the world*. CEV. We are to get people to conform to the will of God and as a first step we should do as the Apostle Paul does to our fellow ignorant gentiles, *Act 17:22 So Paul stood up in front of the council and said: People of Athens, I see that you are very religious. Act 17:23 As I was going through your city and looking at the things you worship, I found an altar with the words, "To an Unknown God." You worship this God, but you don't really know him. So I want to tell you about him. Act 17:24 This God made the world and everything in it. He is Lord of heaven and earth, and he doesn't live in temples built by human hands. Act 17:25 He doesn't need help from anyone. He gives life, breath, and everything else to all people. Act 17:26 From one person God made all nations who live on earth, and he decided when and where every nation would be. Act 17:27 God has done all this, so that we will look for him and reach out and find him. He isn't far from any of us, Act 17:28 and he gives us the power to live, to move, and to be who we are. "We are his children," just as some of your poets have said.* CEV.

No mention of sin yet, but judgement, yes, *Act 17:29 Since we are God's children, we must not think that he is like an idol made out of gold or silver or stone. He isn't like anything that humans have thought up and made. Act 17:30 In the past, God forgave all this because people did not know what they were doing. But now he says that everyone everywhere must turn to him. Act 17:31 He has set a day when he will judge the world's people with fairness. And he has chosen the man Jesus to do the judging for him. God has given proof of this to all of us by raising Jesus from death. Act 17:32 As soon as the people heard Paul say that a man had been raised from death, some of them started*

laughing. Others said, "We will hear you talk about this some other time." Act 17:33 When Paul left the council meeting, Act 17:34 some of the men put their faith in the Lord and went with Paul. One of them was a council member named Dionysius. A woman named Damaris and several others also put their faith in the Lord. CEV.

They are separated out by the “Pauline filter”, the sheep from the goats. Those who do not want to know, the scoffers, are left out of the conversation, and Paul does not waste time in empty argument just seeing who is the cleverest debater, he just does not engage with them again. He takes up with the faithful and proceeds to teach them. Christians spend far too much time debating with the unbeliever and should recognise it for what it is, a diversion of satan. It disappoints me to see such a fine Christian mind as Dr Jim Tours, debating with evolutionists about the origin of life. The natural man does not have the spiritual insight to see what is what, and to argue with a fool is pointless, debating with the unregenerate mind is like pushing water uphill, it keeps running down again, *Pro 26:11 As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly*. No, it is better to educate the willing.

It is sometime before those souls who listen to the message will come to a realisation that they need a “saviour”, that they cannot do it themselves, that all their works are as filthy rags, that God never asked them to do anything other than trust in Him to deliver them. That is what a saviour is. The qualities of such a magnificent person shine far above men, and it is that person who we will spend our days getting to know. We do not have to fear the devil as long as Jesus is our Saviour, He is our strength and shield, our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

The qualities of a “saviour” are to be found in Isaiah, from Chapter 40 through to the end of the book. I dare say that we do not much dwell on that kindness of God, that intricate planning, that love and sacrifice, all of the characteristics of the person, their hardships and sorrows, because we are greedy children, who having got what we want, soon forget the giver. I remember as a child the joy at getting a present from my aunts and uncles, but being a selfish ingrate, I had to be pushed by my parents to send a reply of thanks. I know some other people like that. Which is why if I were to ask Christians to describe the Saviour, they would quickly descend into silence, and if writing they would be pushed to fill up a post card with things to say?

God forewarned us about the Saviour, in fact He gave us 700 years to familiarise ourselves with the manner of the person before He entered the world, just so that we would have no doubt as to whom we were dealing with. One of the great paradoxes is how this person could have been so noticeably reduced in circumstances as to be utterly hideous, despicable, nothing like we would imagine a saviour, yet He was the Saviour, *Isa 53:1 Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? Isa 53:2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no*

form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. Isa 53:3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Isa 53:4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. Isa 53:5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. Isa 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

That says more about man's expectation than the actual truth. Man is always on the lookout for the spectacular, none of which shall be realised, looking for a royal baby in a palace but in reality in a stable, looking for a king in whose kingdom is not of this world, looking for an end time rebuilding of a glorious temple which is already built, *Mat 21:4 All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Mat 21:5 Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.* Jesus will disappoint the expectations of the world but not those of His followers.

Why does the Saviour adopt such a wretched persona? He could have adopted a magnificent body and not been wretched, and so draw all men to Him. But He chose a different path, "*he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not".* It is so that we do not look upon the outward but see the inward beauty and purpose. The world goes after men who are beautiful, like Saul, *1Sa 9:2 And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people*. He seemed alright, but as a saviour of the people he lacked the mind of God.

Our Jesus did not, and under immense pressure submitted to the will of God, *Luk 22:42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done*. We see this as the foremost characteristic of Jesus, and we should see it in the Saviour, who laid everything aside that God might be all in all.

I could go through Isaiah and lay the characteristics of the Saviour before you, and that would make you even lazier and dependent upon me. So I suggest that you find out some of His glories for yourselves and share them with the brethren. It is a magnificent tale, and one that could do with a retelling.

119. King Uzziah

Preparatory reading: 2 Chronicles Chapter 26

This period in Israel's history is seminal for a number of reasons,

- Prophetic activity
- Looming captivity
- The demise of Israel and later Judah.

There is another reason which is a bit speculative at present but I have been giving it a lot of thought. It looks at the key events in Bible history as relating to the "Temple" types which of course find their ultimate meaning in Jesus. The Genesis account of the Creation has God put the man and the woman in the Garden of God. Eden shows many types of the Temple for example, the Cherubim, the Law, the Candlestick, the entrance on the eastern side, the water flowing out for purification.

The Ark of Noah has features of the Temple, both the Ark and the Tabernacle were structures built according to divine instructions, designed for specific purposes: the Ark for preserving life during the flood, and the Tabernacle for God's dwelling and worship among his people, the Ark's three decks, like the Tabernacle's three divisions, suggest a temple-like structure, with the Ark serving as a microcosm of the universe. It has several similarities to the tabernacle: Height, Shape and Ratio, the Ark's dimensions, particularly its three decks and rectangular shape, echo the dimensions and layout of the Tabernacle, which is also a rectangular box with three divisions. Each deck of the Ark is the same height as the Tabernacle and three times the area of the Tabernacle court. The ratio of the width to the height of both the Ark and the Tabernacle is 3:5.

Joseph is a significant part of the book of Genesis occupying 13 of the 50 chapters. Joseph is a type of Jesus and thereby a type of the Temple. He delivers the nation of Israel, protects them from Mizraim, and gives them peace. In the second book of the Bible, 13 chapters are given to the Tabernacle, and many more chapters to the rituals associate with it. The love/hate relationship with God is shown in the wanderings of Israel, the obedience and the disobedience of the tribes and all of this has reference to the sacred dwelling place of God.

I'll not dwell on it longer at present, but to say, the Temple features in the Prophecies of Isaiah, and in all of the prophets except Malachi. Perhaps the significance of the period of Israel's history has something to do with that?

We started to look at the history of the first king, on Isaiah's list, Uzziah or Amazziah, as he is called, *2Ch 26:1 After the death of King Amaziah, the people of Judah crowned his son Uzziah king, even* ***though he was only sixteen at the time****.* ***Uzziah ruled fifty-two years from Jerusalem****, the hometown of his mother* ***Jecoliah****. During his rule, he recaptured and rebuilt the town of Elath.* The king started as a boy and finished his rule as an old man, and we

might expect wisdom and godliness to have accumulated with old age, *Pro 16:31 The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.* Alas, this was not the case, and like king Solomon, he did not improve with age, and we observe as with so many old people, kings get bad when they get old. This decline in the man was due in part to the passing of his mentor, *2Ch 26:4 He obeyed the LORD by doing right, as his father Amaziah had done. 2Ch 26:5 Zechariah was Uzziah's advisor and taught him to obey God. And so, as long as Zechariah was alive, Uzziah was faithful to God, and God made him successful.* CEV. That said, the young man must have been brought up as an independent thinker, so he was bound to make his own choices, for better and for worse, but he was an accomplished man.

He was skilled in the art of warfare and weapons, *2Ch 26:11 Uzziah's army was always ready for battle. Jeiel and Maaseiah were the officers who kept track of the number of soldiers, and these two men were under the command of Hananiah, one of Uzziah's officials. 2Ch 26:12 There were 307,500 trained soldiers, all under the command of 2,600 clan leaders. These powerful troops protected the king against any enemy. 2Ch 26:13 (SEE 26:12) 2Ch 26:14 Uzziah supplied his army with shields, spears, helmets, armor, bows, and stones used for slinging. 2Ch 26:15 Some of his skilled workers invented machines that could shoot arrows and sling large stones. Uzziah set these up in Jerusalem at his defense towers and at the corners of the city wall. God helped Uzziah become more and more powerful, and he was famous all over the world*. CEV. He must have had a big personality to govern such a large army.

He also had a penchant for farming, *2Ch 26:10 He also built defense towers out in the desert. He owned such a large herd of livestock in the western foothills and in the flatlands, that he had cisterns dug there to catch the rainwater.* ***He loved farming****, so he had crops and vineyards planted in the hill country wherever there was fertile soil, and he hired farmers to take care of them*. CEV.

Were the signs of religious independence from God creeping into his life, *2Ki 15:3 Azariah obeyed the LORD by doing right, as his father Amaziah had done. 2Ki 15:4 But Azariah did not destroy the local shrines, and they were still used as places for offering sacrifices*. He did not stamp out false religion and yet his report card gets “good” marked on it although, “Azariah did not destroy the local shrines, and they were still used as places for offering sacrifices”. If he was a “good” king he was not perfect, and perhaps we should not draw any conclusions from this as it is a relative comparison between the kings and not an absolute statement about the state of his soul.

Although he had a long reign it was truncated by his arrogance, *2Ch 26:16 Uzziah became proud of his power, and this led to his downfall. One day, Uzziah disobeyed the LORD his God by going into the temple and burning incense as an offering to him. 2Ch 26:17 Azariah the priest and eighty other brave priests followed Uzziah into the temple 2Ch 26:18 and said, "Your Majesty, this isn't right! You are not allowed to burn incense to the LORD. That must be done only*

by priests who are descendants of Aaron. You will have to leave! You have sinned against the LORD, and so he will no longer bless you." 2Ch 26:19 Uzziah, who was standing next to the incense altar at the time, was holding the incense burner, ready to offer incense to the LORD. He became very angry when he heard Azariah's warning, and leprosy suddenly appeared on his forehead! 2Ch 26:20 Azariah and the other priests saw it and immediately told him to leave the temple. Uzziah realized that the LORD had punished him, so he hurried to get outside. CEV.

He assumed too much, for he was a king but not a priest, although he thought that he was and so he suffered for it. Just what age he was is not stated, but I would estimate that he was in his late fifties, to enable him to have accomplished his many achievements. He would have eked out his final days in isolation from the people of the court and the Temple, in a leper house. He would have had plenty of time to consider his ways, *Lev 13:45 And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. Lev 13:46 All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be*.

Imagine what it was like to have this condition. No wonder the lepers cried to Jesus for mercy, as there was no known cure. Worse than this however was the disease associated with the sin of presumption? The leper had to call out to everyone that he was unclean, to warn them about his presence. Imagine if you had to cry out that you were unclean. But you and I are unclean because of our sin, which we hide so well from view but it is exposed to the gaze of the Almighty, *Luk 5:7 And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. Luk 5:8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying,* ***Depart from me; for I am a sinful man****, O Lord. Luk 5:9 or he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken:* The human race ought to go about shouting “I am sinful, I am sinful”, because that is the state of mankind, that is the state of you and me.

I imagine that in his lonely isolation he had time to turn back to the Lord in repentance. Some might say it was a curse upon him, and that he was being punished, others might say it was a singular blessing because it took the king away from everything that led to his downfall, so now he was granted a time of repentance. Who knows, but he does turn up again in the genealogy of Christ and we hope that he found the Saviour. The disease had no cure in this life, and to emphasis this Uzziah was a leper in life and a leper in death, *2Ch 26:23 Since Uzziah had leprosy, he could not be buried in the royal tombs. Instead, he was buried in a nearby cemetery that the kings owned. His son Jotham then became king*.

Why did Isaiah prophesy during, or rather at the end of Uzziah's reign. At the end of Uzziah's reign we read, ***Isa 6:1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I had a vision of the LORD. He was on his throne high above, and his robe filled the temple****. Isa 6:2 Flaming creatures with six wings each were flying over him. They covered their faces with two of their wings and their bodies with two more. They used the other two wings for flying, Isa 6:3 as they shouted, "Holy, holy, holy, LORD All-Powerful! The earth is filled with your glory." Isa 6:4 As they shouted, the doorposts of the temple shook, and the temple was filled with smoke. Isa 6:5 Then I cried out, "I'm doomed! Everything I say is sinful, and so are the words of everyone around me. Yet I have seen the King, the LORD All-Powerful." Isa 6:6 One of the flaming creatures flew over to me with a burning coal that it had taken from the altar with a pair of metal tongs. Isa 6:7 It touched my lips with the hot coal and said, "This has touched your lips.* ***Your sins are forgiven****, and you are no longer guilty."* CEV.

For all the "good" he did, Uzziah certainly did not glorify God in His Temple on earth, and he was lax about the people's commitment to one "god", because they continued to sacrifice on the high places. The service to God was summed up in the judgement of Judah and Jerusalem (Is Chapter3), but at the same time the Lord shows Isaiah that although they had polluted the earthly Temple, the heavenly Temple was perfectly functioning and unspoilt by this rebellious people.

Did Isaiah understand the meaning of his vision, it was to him only after all? But Isaiah does not know the future exactly, it is hazy to him, *1Pe 1:10 Some prophets told how kind God would be to you, and they searched hard to find out more about the way you would be saved. 1Pe 1:11* ***The Spirit of Christ was in them*** *and was telling them how Christ would suffer and would then be given great honour.* ***So they searched to find out exactly who Christ would be and when this would happen****. 1Pe 1:12 But they were told that they were serving you and not themselves. They preached to you by the power of the Holy Spirit, who was sent from heaven. And* ***their message was only for you****, even though angels would like to know more about it*. CEV.

That is an interesting comment on the prophets by Peter. He says that they were aware of Christ the Messiah within them, they were aware the Messiah would suffer, but they didn't know when this would happen. The prophets preached to us because they were serving us, but they only had part of the message.

Isaiah's encounter with the Lord cleansed him, "Your sins are forgiven". He was now in a position to go to the nation and preach to the "deaf ears" and "blind eyes", *Isa 6:9 Then the LORD told me to go and speak this message to the people: "You will listen and listen, but never understand. You will look and look, but never see." The LORD also said, Isa 6:10 "Make these people stubborn! Make them stop up their ears, cover their eyes, and fail to understand. Don't let them turn to me and be healed."*

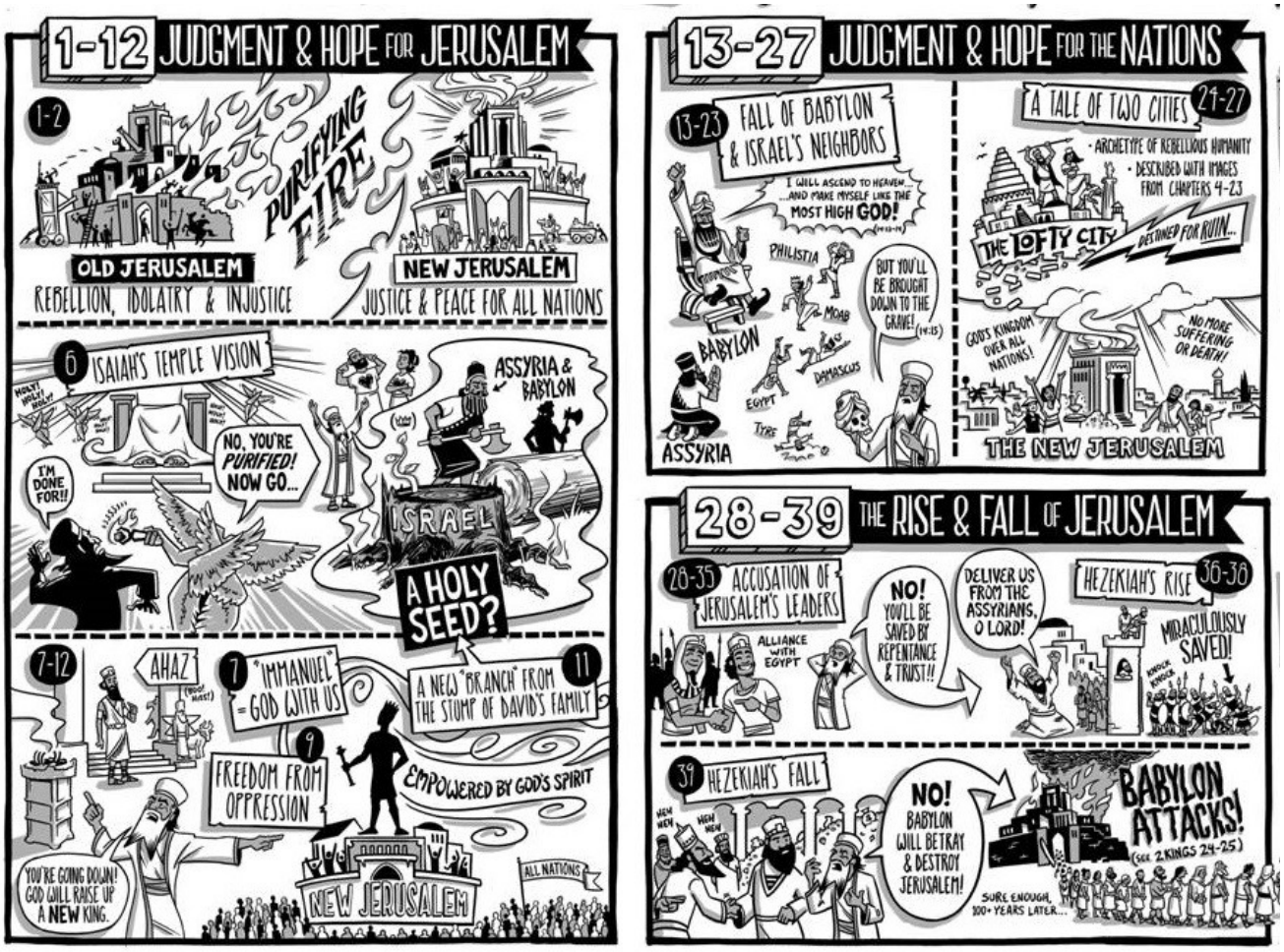
This was like Jesus preaching much later, in fact, it was just what Jesus preached, *Mat 13:14 So* ***God's promise came true, just as the prophet Isaiah had said, "These people will listen and listen, but never understand. They will look and look, but never see****. Mat 13:15 All of them have stubborn minds! Their ears are stopped up, and their eyes are covered. They cannot see or hear or understand. If they could, they would turn to me, and I would heal them." Mat 13:16 But God has blessed you, because your eyes can see and your ears can hear! Mat 13:17 Many prophets and good people were eager to see what you see and to hear what you hear. But I tell you that they did not see or hear*. CEV. This was the judicial judgement on the nation and there was no turning back.

Except there was a hope for a few, even though the people were decimated, *Isa 6:13 If only a tenth of the people are left, even they will be destroyed. But just as stumps remain after trees have been cut down, some of my chosen ones will be left.* CEV. Destruction would proceed to fall upon the tenth that were left, leaving only a remnant, or as the Good News Bible puts it, *Isa 6:13 Even if one person out of ten remains in the land, he too will be destroyed; he will be like the stump of an oak tree that has been cut down." (The stump represents a new beginning for God's people.)*

We shall now look at the three remaining kings, and Isaiah's interaction with them.

120. The structure of Isaiah

Preparatory reading: Isaiah Chapters 1 to 39

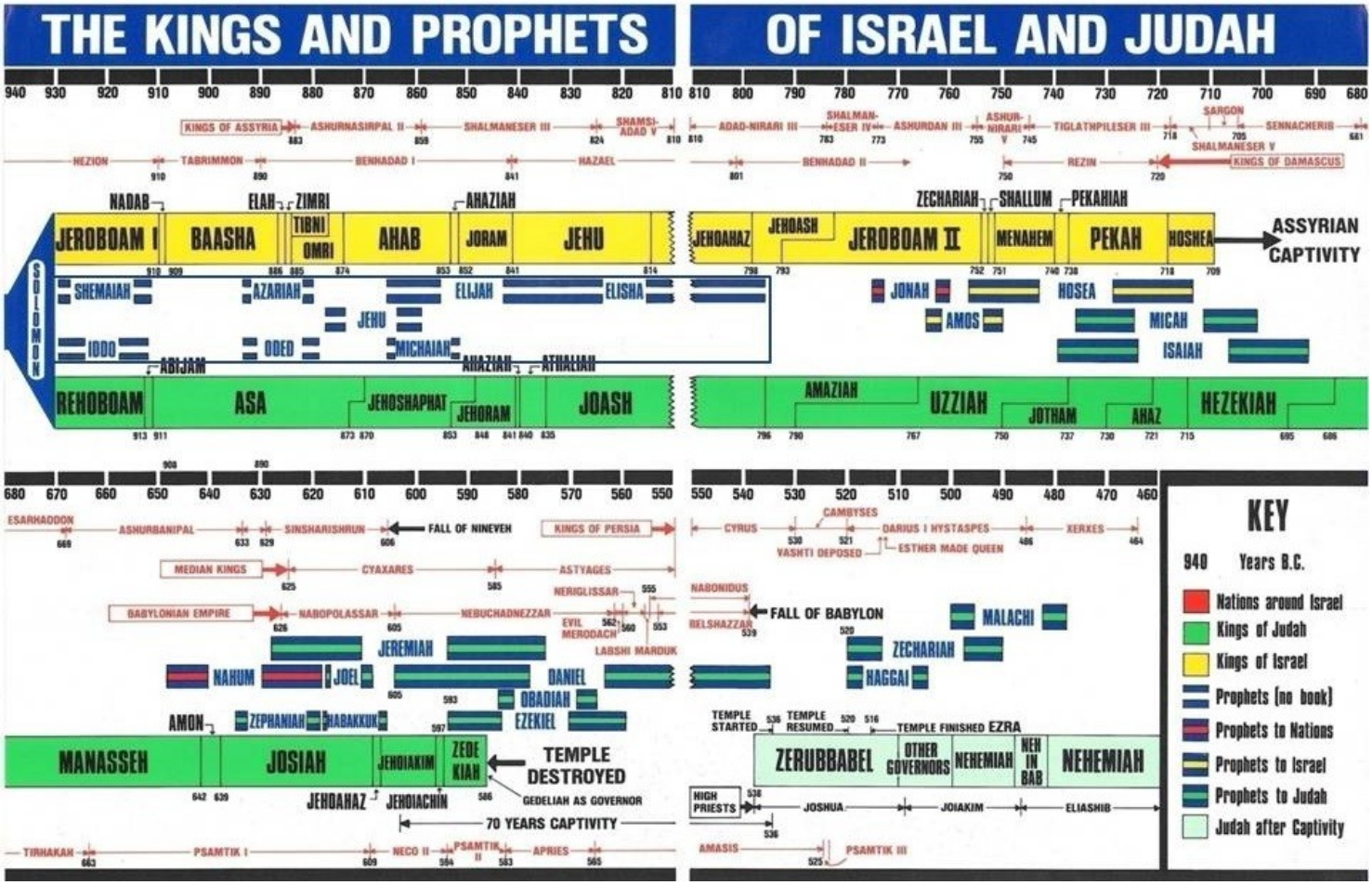

1-12 JUDGMENT & HOPE FOR JERUSALEM
1-2
PURIFYING FIRE
OLD JERUSALEM
REBELLION, IDOLATRY & INJUSTICE
NEW JERUSALEM
JUSTICE & PEACE FOR ALL NATIONS
6 ISAIAH'S TEMPLE VISION
HOLY! HOLY! HOLY!
I'M DONE FOR!!
NO, YOU'RE PURIFIED! NOW GO...
ASSYRIA & BABYLON
ISRAEL
A HOLY SEED?
7-12
AHAZ
7 "IMMANUEL" = GOD WITH US
11
A NEW "BRANCH" FROM THE STUMP OF DAVID'S FAMILY
9
FREEDOM FROM OPPRESSION
EMPOWERED BY GOD'S SPIRIT
YOU'RE GOING DOWN! GOD WILL RAISE UP A NEW KING.
NEW JERUSALEM
ALL NATIONS
13-27 JUDGMENT & HOPE FOR THE NATIONS
13-23 FALL OF BABYLON & ISRAEL'S NEIGHBORS
I WILL ASCEND TO HEAVEN... ...AND MAKE MYSELF LIKE THE MOST HIGH GOD! (14:12-14)
PHILISTIA
MOAB
BUT YOU'LL BE BROUGHT DOWN TO THE GRAVE! (14:15)
BABYLON
DAMASCUS
EGYPT
TYRE
ASSYRIA
24-27 A TALE OF TWO CITIES
• ARCHETYPE OF REBELLIOUS HUMANITY
• DESCRIBED WITH IMAGES FROM CHAPTERS 4-23
THE LOFTY CITY
DESTINED FOR RUIN...
GOD'S KINGDOM OVER ALL NATIONS!
NO MORE SUFFERING OR DEATH!
THE NEW JERUSALEM
28-39 THE RISE & FALL OF JERUSALEM
28-35 ACCUSATION OF JERUSALEM'S LEADERS
ALLIANCE WITH EGYPT
NO! YOU'LL BE SAVED BY REPENTANCE & TRUST!!
DELIVER US FROM THE ASSYRIANS, O LORD!
36-38 HEZEKIAH'S RISE
MIRACULOUSLY SAVED!
39 HEZEKIAH'S FALL
NEW NEW NEW
NO! BABYLON WILL BETRAY & DESTROY JERUSALEM!
BABYLON ATTACKS! (SEE 2 KINGS 24-25)
SURE ENOUGH, 100+ YEARS LATER...

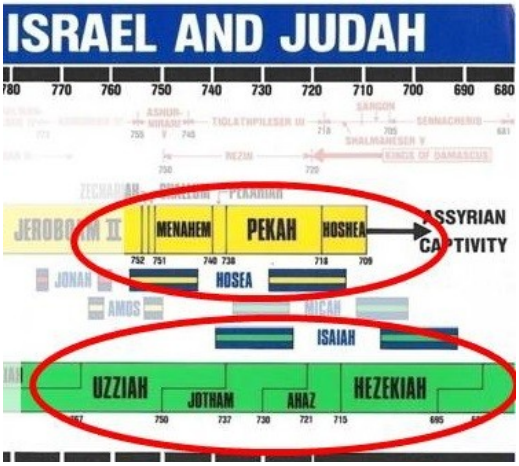
Having looked at some key words in Isaiah's prophecy we turn to the actual prophecy in more detail, and I have chosen the "Bible Project" overview as a very good pictorial view of this prophecy. I am dealing with the first 39 Chapters. It is a mere coincidence that Isaiah is divided the way that it is as John Sampson remarks,

> Whoever divided Isaiah into chapters did a rather interesting thing, though I doubt whether it was deliberate. They divided the book into 66 chapters, the same number as the books of the Bible. Furthermore, they divided Isaiah into two distinct parts of 39 chapters and 27 chapters. It just happens that the Old Testament has 39 books and the New Testament 27.
>
> Also, the message of the first 39 chapters summarizes the message of the Old Testament, and the message of the last 27 chapters summarizes exactly the message of the New Testament! The second part of Isaiah (i.e. chapter 40) begins with the voice crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord' – words later used by John the Baptist. It moves on to a servant of the Lord who is anointed by the Holy Spirit, dies for the sins of his people, and is raised and exalted after his death. It then moves on to the declaration that 'You shall be my witnesses to the ends of the earth', and it finishes up with God

saying, ‘I am making all things new. I create a new heaven and a new earth.’

That is one way of remembering what Isaiah is about as well as remembering the structure of the Bible. The Book begins, *Isa 1:1 The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.* Let us find out what we can about these four kings so that we are clearer about the times in which they lived.



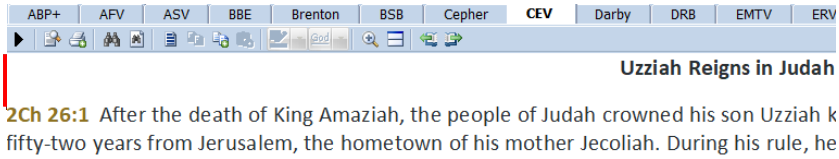


The timelines show the kings of Israel and Judah and their respective prophets. Isaiah prophecies to Judah and Hosea prophecies to Israel. Hosea prophecies at the time of the captivity of Israel and Isaiah prophesies of the captivity of Judah which is scheduled for 120 years later. Both Hosea and Isaiah speak during the reign of the same kings, *Hos 1:1 The word of the LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.....Isa 1:1 The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.*

Kings of Judah	Years of Reign
Uzziah (Azariah)	767–740 B.C.
Jotham	750–735
Ahaz	735–715
Hezekiah	715–686

There are 32 verses in Hosea mentioning Ephraim, the most in a book of the Old Testament, showing its main subject. We shall take a look a the prophecy of Hosea later, but for now we home in on the reign of four kings of Judah, **Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah**.

Uzziah is written about in the second book of Chronicles Chapter26. I shall be using the Common English Version (CEV) as I think that the story comes out a little better. The Common English Version (CEV) has an audio facility on B sword which you can just listen to by activating the arrow


ABP+ AFV ASV BBE Brenton BSB Cepher CEV Darby DRB EMTV ERV
Uzziah Reigns in Judah
2Ch 26:1 After the death of King Amaziah, the people of Judah crowned his son Uzziah k
fifty-two years from Jerusalem, the hometown of his mother Jecoliah. During his rule, he

All the prophets with the exception of Micah began their work in the days of Uzziah and continued through the reign of Hezekiah. It will be clear from the accounts of their lives the difficulties they worked against.

- Amos... in the days of Uzziah of Judah, Jeroboam of Israel, Amos 1:1
- Hosea ... in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, of Judah, Jeroboam of Israel Hos 1:1
- Isaiah ... in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Isa 1:1
- Micah ... in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, Mic 1:1

I do not think that these kings and their reign are mentioned for nothing. The events of the first section of Isaiah, Chapters 1 to 39, occurs in the reign of these kings, as do the key events of some of the other prophets. Why? I don't know about you, but I get the feeling that we Christians are so overwhelmed by the scale of the prophecies and that we give up on them, trying to find any structure or consistency in them gets so difficult that we just treat the books as a series of disjointed texts. You know, they become like those little desktop calendars, with a daily verse, heart warming and true, but showing little of the context of the verse.

It is perhaps this modern approach to the Bible, where we do not spend much time ruminating on the Scripture, and with this attitude and a few disjointed texts under our arm, we launch ourselves into fantastic speculation over what will come to pass. The restoration of the nation of Israel is just one of those speculations. Texts and contexts are neglected and become pretexts for a theory which pleases us but has no basis in Scripture. We seem to be in a stage where a jumble of texts are sorted in some arbitrary order to give us an answer to where we think that the prophet is leading us.

Sometimes when we study the prophets we dwell too much on the depths of their meaning and so lose the context. I am taking the view that these books,

prophecies, oracles and visions were given to the people in “chunks”, and that later they were all bought into one book. These “chunks” were written to ordinary people who were not intellectuals, but the working man as well as the rulers. They were written to people like me so they were in a simple form. They had a message which did not need much of a brain to interpret, they were warnings to them and us, that if they or we continued to go our own way in sin we would reap the consequences. That is a fairly straight forward message, *2Ch 36:16 But the people only laughed and insulted these prophets. They ignored what the LORD God was trying to tell them, until he finally became so angry that nothing could stop him from punishing Judah and Jerusalem*. CEV.

The message of repentance is proclaimed during the reign of each king, so that all generations come under the sound of the prophet. The king, I suppose, is the one who is the sum and substance of the nation, “**as goes the king so goes the nation**”. When we see the lives of the kings, **Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah,** we are also looking at the lives of the people, as Ecclesiasticus says, *Sir 10:2* ***As the judge of the people is himself, so are his officers****; and what manner of man the ruler of the city is, such are all they that dwell therein.* It is rather like the saying of Ezekiel, *Eze 16:44 Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, saying,* ***As is the mother, so is her daughter***. The people who surround the ruler are like the ruler, to whit, Donald Trump’s entourage are loyally like him, and Kier Starmer’s entourage are like him. The king’s people are like the king, just as we are like, or should be like King Jesus.

The fist king on our list is Uzziah or as he is also known, aka, Azariah. There are many reasons for this use of multiple names for kings, but one of them is that kings used both their royal and secular names. For example, Solomon was his royal name, and his secular name at birth was Jedidiah. Uzziah is also a royal name, and Azariah is likely a personal name.

Azariah Reigns in Judah

2Ki 15:1 Azariah son of Amaziah became king of Judah in Jeroboam's twenty-seventh year as king of Israel. 2Ki 15:2 ***He was only sixteen years old when he became king****, and* ***he ruled fifty-two years from Jerusalem****, which was also the hometown of his mother* ***Jecoliah.*** *2Ki 15:3 Azariah obeyed the LORD by doing right, as his father Amaziah had done. 2Ki 15:4 But Azariah did not destroy the local shrines, and they were still used as places for offering sacrifices. 2Ki 15:5 The LORD punished Azariah with leprosy for the rest of his life. He wasn't allowed to live in the royal palace, so his son Jotham lived there and ruled in his place. 2Ki 15:6 Everything else Azariah did while he was king is written in The History of the Kings of Judah. 2Ki 15:7 Azariah died and was buried beside his ancestors in Jerusalem. His son Jotham then became king.* CEV.

Uzziah Reigns in Judah

2Ch 26:1 After the death of King Amaziah, the people of Judah crowned his son Uzziah king, even ***though he was only sixteen at the time****.* ***Uzziah ruled***

***fifty-two years from Jerusalem**, the hometown of his mother **Jecoliah**. During his rule, he recaptured and rebuilt the town of Elath. 2Ch 26:2 (SEE 26:1) 2Ch 26:3 (SEE 26:1) 2Ch 26:4 He obeyed the LORD by doing right, as his father Amaziah had done. 2Ch 26:5 Zechariah was Uzziah's advisor and taught him to obey God. And so, as long as Zechariah was alive, Uzziah was faithful to God, and God made him successful. 2Ch 26:6 While Uzziah was king, he started a war against the Philistines. He smashed the walls of the cities of Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod, then rebuilt towns around Ashdod and in other parts of Philistia. 2Ch 26:7 God helped him defeat the Philistines, the Arabs living in Gur-Baal, and the Meunites. 2Ch 26:8 Even the Ammonites paid taxes to Uzziah. He became very powerful, and people who lived as far away as Egypt heard about him. 2Ch 26:9 In Jerusalem, Uzziah built fortified towers at the Corner Gate, the Valley Gate, and the place where the city wall turned inward. 2Ch 26:10 He also built defense towers out in the desert. He owned such a large herd of livestock in the western foothills and in the flatlands, that he had cisterns dug there to catch the rainwater. **He loved farming**, so he had crops and vineyards planted in the hill country wherever there was fertile soil, and he hired farmers to take care of them. 2Ch 26:11 Uzziah's army was always ready for battle. Jeiel and Maaseiah were the officers who kept track of the number of soldiers, and these two men were under the command of Hananiah, one of Uzziah's officials. 2Ch 26:12 There were 307,500 trained soldiers, all under the command of 2,600 clan leaders. These powerful troops protected the king against any enemy. 2Ch 26:13 (SEE 26:12) 2Ch 26:14 Uzziah supplied his army with shields, spears, helmets, armor, bows, and stones used for slinging. 2Ch 26:15 Some of his skilled workers invented machines that could shoot arrows and sling large stones. Uzziah set these up in Jerusalem at his defense towers and at the corners of the city wall. God helped Uzziah become more and more powerful, and he was famous all over the world.*

Uzziah's Pride and Punishment

2Ch 26:16 Uzziah became proud of his power, and this led to his downfall. One day, Uzziah disobeyed the LORD his God by going into the temple and burning incense as an offering to him. 2Ch 26:17 Azariah the priest and eighty other brave priests followed Uzziah into the temple 2Ch 26:18 and said, "Your Majesty, this isn't right! You are not allowed to burn incense to the LORD. That must be done only by priests who are descendants of Aaron. You will have to leave! You have sinned against the LORD, and so he will no longer bless you." 2Ch 26:19 Uzziah, who was standing next to the incense altar at the time, was holding the incense burner, ready to offer incense to the LORD. He became very angry when he heard Azariah's warning, and leprosy suddenly appeared on his forehead! 2Ch 26:20 Azariah and the other priests saw it and immediately told him to leave the temple. Uzziah realized that the LORD had punished him, so he hurried to get outside. 2Ch 26:21 Uzziah had leprosy the rest of his life. He was no longer allowed in the temple or in his own palace. That's why his son Jotham lived there and ruled in his place. 2Ch 26:22 Everything else Uzziah did while he was king is in the records written by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. 2Ch 26:23 Since Uzziah had leprosy, he could not be buried in the royal tombs.

Instead, he was buried in a nearby cemetery that the kings owned. His son Jotham then became king. CEV.

121. King Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah

Preparatory reading: 2 Chronicles Chapter 27

2Ch 27:1 Jotham was twenty-five years old when he became king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for sixteen years. Jerushah his mother was the daughter of Zadok. 2Ch 27:2 Jotham obeyed the LORD and did right. He followed the example of his father Uzziah, except he never burned incense in the temple as his father had done. But the people of Judah kept sinning against the LORD.

Jotham became king of Judah at age twenty-five and reigned for sixteen years, from 750 to 735 BC (2 Kings 15:33; 2 Chronicles 27:1). “He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father Uzziah had done, but unlike him he did not enter the temple of the Lord. The people, however, continued their corrupt practices” (2 Chronicles 27:2; see also 2 Kings 15:34–35). King Uzziah had been faithful to the Lord but then became prideful and attempted to burn incense on the altar of the Lord, something only priests were permitted to do (2 Chronicles 26:16–20). As a result, God afflicted Uzziah with leprosy. Uzziah lived out the rest of his days in a separate house, while his son Jotham oversaw the palace and governed the people (2 Chronicles 26:21). Jotham did not repeat his father’s mistake of presumptuously entering the temple.

“Jotham grew powerful because he walked steadfastly before the Lord his God” (2 Chronicles 27:6). He rebuilt the Upper Gate of the temple and also did work on the wall at the hill of Ophel and built towns, forts, and towers (2 Chronicles 27:3–4). However, King Jotham failed to remove the high places so the people continued to make sacrifices there (2 Kings 15:35). Jotham waged a successful war against the Ammonites, resulting in their paying him tribute for three years (2 Chronicles 27:5). During Jotham’s reign “the Lord began to send Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah against Judah” (2 Kings 15:37). During the reign of Jotham’s son Ahaz, the Arameans would march against Judah, resulting in defeat and heavy casualties for Judah (2 Chronicles 28:5). Initial defeat was followed by Ahaz seeking help from the Assyrians and ultimately looting and shutting up God’s temple and creating more high places (2 Kings 16:5–18; 2 Chronicles 28:5–25).

Isaiah, Hosea, and Micah all prophesied during Jotham’s reign (Isaiah 1:1; Hosea 1:1; Micah 1:1). Also, the genealogies in 1 Chronicles 1–5 were recorded during Jotham’s reign (1 Chronicles 5:17).

Despite Jotham’s godly example, his son Ahaz proved to be a wicked king. Even so, both Jotham and Ahaz are ancestors of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:9). God is able to use all people to accomplish His good purposes.

The rulers are carried away into captivity

Uzziah, Jotham & Ahaz
These three kings of Judah had a great impact on the preaching of the prophets sent at that time. We have seen in our own culture how leaders can affect the culture and how the people can influence those leaders. The sexual revolution led to legalized abortion, forever changing the nature of the political parties here. Later, this same sexual revolution legalized homosexuality and further changing the political parties and which has now led to homosexual marriage. Few alive before 1970 could have envisioned the impact that the culture had on the selection of leaders, how the leaders have pushed the culture, and how both of these have changed the landscape of the hearts who are now hearing the gospel.

There is nothing new under the sun, and this has happened as a cy cle since the beginning. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. ... so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ... 24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

2Ch 26:3 Sixteen years old was Uzziah when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Jecoliah of Jerusalem. 2Ch 26:4 And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah did. 2Ch 26:5 And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper.

2Ki 15:1 In the twenty and seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel began Azariah son of Amaziah king of Judah to reign. 2Ki 15:2 Sixteen years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned two and fifty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jecholiah of Jerusalem. 2Ki 15:3 And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done; 2Ki 15:4 Save that the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burnt incense still on the high places.

Uzziah came to the throne at age 16 and reigned for 52 years. Just to complicate things, the book of king names him Azariah, *2Ki 14:21 After his death the people*

of Judah made his son Azariah king, even though he was only sixteen at the time. 2Ki 14:22 Azariah was the one who later recaptured and rebuilt the town of Elath. Azariah means the “Lord Helps” and Uzziah means the ”Lord Strengthens”.

He was a good king, but I suspect he was greatly assisted by Zechariah, not the prophet which came much later, but by a good advisor to Uzziah’s father, 2Ch 26:5 Zechariah was Uzziah's advisor and taught him to obey God. And so, as long as Zechariah was alive, Uzziah was faithful to God, and God made him successful.

All the prophets with the exception of Micah began their work in the days of Uzziah and continued through the reign of Hezekiah. It will be clear from the accounts of their lives the difficulties they worked against.

Amos... in the days of Uzziah of Judah, Jeroboam of Israel, Amos 1:1
Hosea ... in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, of Judah, Jeroboam of Israel Hos 1:1
Isaiah ... in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Isa 1:1
Micah ... in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, Mic 1:1
Uzziah/Amaziah
Azaryah'. helped by Jehovah

Uzz'iyah, strength of Jehovah but in the prolonged form Uzziya'hu,(from McClintock & Strong).

Uzziah was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecholiah of Jerusalem. 4 And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. 5 He sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God; and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper. 2Chron 26:3-5In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Azariah the son of Amaziah, king of Judah,became king. 2 He was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-two yearsin Jerusalem.

Since he is called Uzziah in the prophets, we will stay with that name, and since this name is used in Chronicles, which is a much more specific account of his life, we will work out Chronicles. He begins his reign at 16, and although we are not given any further information, while he was under the guidance of a prophet named Zechariah, he sought God and God made him prosper.

Whether this lasted most of his life or only a short time is not recorded. God made him to Prosper.

While under the guidance of Zechariah, still seeking God, he went to war against the Philistines and

won a great battle and God greatly blessed him.
1 Now he went out and made war against the Philistines, and broke down the wall of Gath, the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod; and he built cities around Ashdod and among the Philistines. 7 God helped him against the Philistines, against the Arabians who lived in Gur Baal, and against the Meunites. 8 Also the Ammonites brought tribute to Uzziah. His fame spread as far as the entrance of Egypt, for he became exceedingly strong. 2 Chron 26:6-8 And he made devices in Jerusalem, invented by skillful men, to be on the towers and the corners, to shoot arrows and large stones. So his fame spread far and wide, for he was marvelously helped till he became strong. 2 Chron 26:15

Uzziah's Pride
Clearly after the death of Zechariah, Uzziah's false estimate of his own power and ability led him to go against God's law. He wanted to do the work of the priest and thus entered into the Temple with a censer. But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the LORD his God by entering the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. 17 So Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him were eighty priests of the LORD — valiant men. 18 And they withstood King Uzziah, and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have trespassed! You shall have no honor from the LORD God." 19 Then Uzziah became furious; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense. 2 Chr. 26:16-19 Because of this pride, he sinned and entered the temple. When the priest went in to warn him about his sin, instead of being contrite and repentant he became angry. God did nothing when he entered the temple, but when he was still stubborn in his rebellion after being rebuked, God intervened with punishment. And while he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead, before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the incense altar. 20 And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and there, on his forehead, he was leprous; so they thrust him out of that place. Indeed he also hurried to get out, because the LORD had struck him. 2Chr. 26:19-20 The punishment was swift and final. He was definitely humbled at this moment, but there was no longer any room for repentance and he remained a leper for the rest of his life.

King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death. He dwelt in an isolated house, because he was a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD. Then Jotham his son was over the king's house,
judging the people of the land. 2Chr. 26:21 Other than this one event, nothing else is written, so we have to fall back on the summary of his life in Kings, that he did what was right. And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done, 4 except that the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the
high places.

2 Kings 15:3-5 Isaiah’s Call. It was in the year that Uzziah died that Isaiah received his call. From the events in this call, we get a good assessment of the conditions in Judah as Uzziah’s 52 year reign came to a close.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. 2 Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" 4 And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts." 6 Then one of the seraphim flewto me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. 7 And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged." 8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me." 9 And He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' 10 "Make the heart of this people dull, And their ears heavy, And shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be healed." 11 Then I said, "Lord, how long?" And He answered: "Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, The houses are without a man, Theland is utterly desolate, 12 The LORD has removed men far away, And the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.

Jotham
Since Jotham had been helping his father from the time of he was struck with leprosy, and he was 25 when he began to reign at the death of his father, it appears it was late in Uzziah’s reign that this occurred. Jotham was a good king, but did not stop the corruption of the people. Jotham was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jerushah the daughter of Zadok. 2 And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD , according to all that his father Uzziah had done (although he did not enter the temple of the LORD). But still the people acted corruptly. 2Chr. 27:1-2 Prepared his ways before the LORD His reign was prosperous and busy and God blessed him in his work because he prepared his ways before the Lord. He built the Upper Gate of the house of the LORD , and he built extensively on the wall of Ophel. 4 Moreover he built cities in the mountains of Judah, and in the forests he built fortresses and towers. 5 He also fought with the king of the Ammonites and defeated them. And the people of Ammon gave him in that year one hundred talents of silver, ten thousand kors of wheat, and ten thousand of barley. The people of Ammon paid this to him in the second and third years also. 6 So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God. 2 Chron 27:3-6 Yet in spite of his reign and God’s blessings, the people still had the terrible heart He had revealed to Isaiah. At this time, God began to punish Isreal. Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all that he did, are they not

written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 37 In those days the LORD began to send Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah against Judah. 38 So Jotham rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David his father. Then Ahaz his son reigned in his place. 2Kings 15:36-38

Ahaz
Ahaz was twenty when he began his reign and he was more interested in the lifestyle of those he lived among than what God had revealed in His law. Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and he did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord, as his father David had done. 2 For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made molded images for the Baals. 3 He burned incense in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. 4 And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree. 2 Chron 28:1-4

God sent adversaries
God was attempting to do for Judah what he had done throughout the time of the judges. He sent adversaries who would bring Judah to their senses. It failed with Ahaz because he allied himself with the king of Assyria. Then Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to make war; and they besieged Ahaz but could not overcome him. 6 At that time Rezin king of Syria captured Elath for Syria, and drove the men of Judah from Elath. Then the Edomites* went to Elath, and dwell there to this day. 2 Kings 16:5-6 So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, saying, "I am your servant and your son. Come up and save me from the hand of the king of Syria and from the hand of the king of Israel, who rise up against me." 8 And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the Lord , and in the treasuries of the king's house, and sent it as a present to the king of Assyria. 9 So the king of Assyria heeded him; for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus and took it, carried its people captive to Kir, and killed Rezin. 2 Kings 16:7-9

Ahaz builds a new altar.
After meeting with the king of Assyria and seeing the altar they used to worship their idols, he gives a command to get the plans, remove the altar God had revealed to Israel and replace it with his heathen altar. Now King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, and saw an altar that was at Damascus; and King Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the design of the altar and its pattern, according to all its workmanship. 11 Then Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus. So Urijah the priest made it before King Ahaz came back from Damascus. 2 Kings 16:10-12

He also brought the bronze altar which was before the Lord , from the front of the temple — from between the new altar and the house of the Lord — and put it on the north side of the new altar. 15 Then King Ahaz commanded Urijah the

priest, saying, "On the great new altar burn the morning burnt offering, the evening grain offering, the king's burnt sacrifice, and his grain offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land, their grain offering, and their drink offerings; and sprinkle on it all the blood of the burnt offering and all the blood of the sacrifice. And the bronze altar shall be for me to inquire by." 2 Kings 16:14-16

Great evil in Judah.
Now in the time of his distress King Ahaz became increasingly unfaithful to the Lord. This is that King Ahaz. 23 For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus which had defeated him, saying, "Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me." But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel. 2 Chron 28:22-24

Isaiah 1: Let us Reason
Isaiah prophesied in the 8th century BC (roughly 740-700 BC). His work encompassed the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. This time-frame also encompassed the judgment on the northern kingdom of Israel, as the capital Samaria fell around 721 BC. This was a tumultuous time, and Isaiah begins by immediately calling out the sin in the nation. The people had forsaken the Lord (v. 4) and they would be judged as a result. The rulers and teachers especially would have to answer for the way they had led the people astray. The prophets often pointed to the sins of idolatry, ritualism, and injustice. God would not tolerate the idea that they would bring sacrifices, then go out and live in iniquity. Though God would judge them, He still offered hope. “Come now, let us reason together,” said the Lord. He was still willing to forgive if they would repent (vv. 18-19). Today, we know that forgiveness is offered through Christ.

Isaiah 2: The Highest of the Mountains
Isaiah is known for his messianic prophecies, and he wastes little time in pointing to Jesus. He points to the “latter days” as a time when “the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains” and “all the nations shall flow to it.” This describes the gospel of the kingdom of God. Many would come to the Lord, seek His teaching, and walk in His paths. The law would go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (see Acts 1:8). The ultimate answer and hope through judgment would be the coming of the Messiah and the new covenant. In the meantime, they still needed to repent. The Day of the Lord (a day of judgment) would come, and they needed to trust in the Lord instead of man.

Isaiah 3: Rottenness
Though the northern kingdom of Israel would be destroyed, Judah and Jerusalem needed to learn the lessons well, for they too would fall in judgment if they did not repent. Sadly, it was the leaders and elders of the people who were crushing their own. “What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor?” The injustices by those who were the wealthy, ruling classes against the poor were so bad that God promised retribution. “Instead of perfume there

will be rottenness; and instead of a belt, a rope; and instead of well-set hair, baldness; and instead of a rich robe, a skirt of sackcloth; and branding instead of beauty. Your men shall fall by the sword and your mighty men in battle. And her gates shall lament and mourn; empty, she shall sit on the ground." This is not a pretty picture, but it describes their spiritual desolation and serves as a continual warning for the need to do what is right.

Isaiah 4: The Branch
Isaiah returns to the messianic theme. In contrast to the ugliness of those who preferred physical beauty over spiritual life, the "branch" (a way of speaking of the Messiah, one who would come through David) would be beautiful and glorious. The Lord would wash away the filth of the city and those who remain, a remnant, shall be holy. Using the language of God's presence, as when He was with Israel in the wilderness and in the tabernacle, the people would be accompanied by "the cloud by day, and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory there will be a canopy." This is the picture of what the Messiah would bring. Christians today need to be thankful that we live in the fulfillment of the Messianic era.

Isaiah 5: The Vineyard
God saw His people as His "beloved," and like a beautiful vineyard. He did everything to make it produce, but instead of grapes, it produced something more like poisoned berries. What more could God have done for the people? Yet they rebelled and became rotten. God says that, therefore, He would remove the hedge and let the vineyard be trampled down and devoured. He reveals that this is really about His people. He then pronounces a series of woes upon them. The people would go into exile one day for their sins. One of the well-known passages in Isaiah is here, and it describes well the problem: "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight!" (vv. 20-21). May God help us not to think this way!

Isaiah 6: A Vision of Glory
Isaiah sees a vision of God sitting high and lifted up on His throne. The train of His robe filled the temple while seraphim cried out, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" The foundations shook at His voice and the house was filled with smoke. Isaiah was overwhelmed. "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" A seraphim picked up a coal from the alter and touched the lips of Isaiah, declaring that his sins and guilt were taken away. Now as God called out, "Whom shall I send?" Isaiah responded, "Here am I." He was then commissioned to go preach even to those who would not listen. This vision is what brought Isaiah to the realization that he needed to preach God's message. God's glory convicted him of his sin and he experienced forgiveness. This same realization can help us today see the need to teach God's word to others, even when they will not listen.

Isaiah 7: A Sign
Isaiah was sent to King Ahaz of Judah (Hezekiah's father). The kings of Israel (north) and Syria were pressuring Ahaz to join an alliance against Assyria. This caused great fear. Isaiah would tell Ahaz not to be afraid, for that alliance would not stand. Ahaz was even told to ask for a sign, and that a sign would be given. That sign involving the birth of a child had messianic implications: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Sadly, the sign would not be heeded. Because of the attitude of Ahaz, who was wicked, the Assyrians would also invade Judah. Ahaz serves as an example of what can happen when we refuse to listen to God and instead seek other counsel. This will be in contrast to Hezekiah.

Isaiah 8: To the Teaching!
The end of chapter 7 blends into chapter 8. Where would the people seek guidance? They want to avoid trouble, but by not listening to God they are creating the very trouble they wish to avoid. The son born to Isaiah (Maher-shalal-hash-baz) indicated that Assyria would invade and take away the spoils. Yet again, if the people would just learn to trust God, they would not need to fear either the northern alliance or the Assyrians. "God is with us" (Immanuel) are words of great comfort. Instead of looking to other forms of counsel, they needed to hear Isaiah, listen to God's message, and trust Him. Mediums and other could not give what God gives. Therefore, "To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn." It is easy to trust the wrong sources, even today. We need to be committed to God's will, God's word, and trust Him when we feel pressed by the world.

Isaiah 9: A Divine, Royal Son
While God's prophets tell it like it is in terms of sin and judgment, they also provide signs of hope. "But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish." Isaiah goes back to a child who is born, a royal child who would be their hope in difficult times. Speaking as if it is a done deal in his time, Isaiah shows that the child would actually be a manifestation of the mighty God Himself. He would also be the One who would sit on the throne of David as King. There would be no end to His kingdom of justice and righteousness. This was a promise of restoration. In the meantime, the people would complain that God was not with them because of what they would suffer, but did not see the connection to their failure to repent. Thankfully, we are able to see how God did restore the people and bring about the Messiah so that we, too, can share in the blessings of our King of kings.

Isaiah 10: Be Not Afraid
Assyria, which served as the rod of God's anger against Israel for her iniquities, would also be judged. Little did the Assyrians know that they were serving God's purposes, yet they were arrogant and wicked in their intent. Consequently, God would "punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the boastful look in his eyes." While the king of Assyria boasted that he did it all by

this own power and wisdom, the Assyrians would be brought low and consumed by God. God would have a remnant of His people who trust in Him. Once God's people understand that God would fight for them, they had no need to fear the Assyrians. Indeed, trusting God brings great comfort to those of faith.

Isaiah 11: The Branch
The Messianic nature of this chapter is apparent from verse 1 as a promise is made of a shoot or branch that spring forth from Jesse (David's father). The Spirit of the Lord would be upon Him and all of His judgments will be made in righteousness (see Matt 3:16; John 7:24). Then, the character of His people is indicated through the peaceful cohabitation of animals that would normally be enemies (compare with Isaiah 2:4). At that same time, the branch (i.e., Jesus) would stand as a banner for all the nations. He will signal the nations and also bring back His remnant from Israel. The Messiah will make all things right, judge the wicked, and restore His people.

Isaiah 12: God is my salvation!
In the day of the Messiah, God's people will give thanks to the Lord and find comfort in Him. They will say, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation." They will draw from the springs of salvation, give thanks, call upon His name, and make His deeds known among the nations. Herein the greatness of God is extolled as salvation is made known. We who live in Christ are able to see how God brought all of this about. Praise God!

Isaiah 13: Against Babylon
Isaiah looks ahead and foresees the downfall and judgment of Babylon. During Isaiah's time, the threat was Assyria; the Babylonians were not yet what they would become. Isaiah once again uses the language of judgment to speak about the destruction of a nation that would become so proud and evil and it would become the namesake of wicked governments. The day of the Lord would come against them, and the Lord will strike down their arrogance and punish their iniquities. The Medes (Medo-Persian Empire) would be stirred up against Babylon and they will be overthrown. This prophecy would be vindicated in the overthrow of Babylon and return from captivity. Even so, John uses Babylon as a reference to the wicked nation that opposed God and His people (book of Revelation). God will always win the day.

Isaiah 14: Babylon Fallen
Continuing from chapter 13, Isaiah points to the victory of God's people. Babylon would fall, and the people would be able to rejoce again. Babylon will be swept with the broom of destruction for her pride and wickedness. Yet Isaiah also reminds the people that God would also judge Assyria and Philistia. One might wonder why God would point so far ahead to Babylon. This whole section should have served as a comfort and encouragement to the people who were fearful of what Assyria might do. Yet with Babylon soon on the heels of Assyria, they could also take comfort that Babylon also would not ultimately stand. While God used

these nations to bring judgment, God also judged them for their evil. This should always remind us now that God rules in the nations of mankind.

Isaiah 15: Moab!
Isaiah turns his attention to Moab in this chapter. Moab was situated just east of the Dead Sea and they were perpetual enemies of Israel. They were even involved in trying to curse Israel and then causing Israel to commit terrible sin with the help of Balaam (Num 22-24; Num 25:1-3; cf. Rev 2:14). Now, Isaiah says, Moab is undone. The people of Moab would be judged for their sins, "For a cry has gone around the land of Moab." All nations answer to God.

Isaiah 16: Where Can Moab Turn?
Isaiah continues speaking of judgment against Moab. The "daughters of Moab" would be scattered and they would have to deal with the fallout from this judgment. They would be looking for shelter, for a refuge, and they could find it the same way God's people would find refuge: in the Davidic King. People in despair, including those outside of Israel, could turn to the true and living God for help and comfort. In Christ, this is especially true. All nations may turn to Him to find the peace that passes understanding. Nations like Moab, persisting in their sins, will not prevail.

Isaiah 17: Damascus is Like Israel
Now Isaiah turns toward Damascus and issues judgment against the city. "Damascus will cease to be a city and will become a heap of ruins." Damascus was the capital of Syria, just northeast of Israel. Like Israel, Syria would only have a remnant left. Syria had been guilty of teaming up with Ephraim against Judah. Both nations would be judged and scattered with only a remnant left. When judgment comes, instead of looking to the idols, "man will look to his Maker, and his eyes will look on the Holy One of Israel." People have turned away from God who alone can save them. This is the fate of all who do not remember the Lord.

Isaiah 18: Cush
Cush is probably the southern most part of Egypt and is closely associated with Egypt (see Psalm 68:31), so the judgment against Cush is tied to judgment against Egypt (ch. 19). Since Egypt was one of the nations of kings of Judah might turn to for help, Isaiah reminded them that Cush and Egypt would also fall. No nation was able to keep God from them. It made no sense, then, for anyone to turn to these nations for help rather than trusting in God. Instead of tribute being brought to these nations, tribute will be brought to the Lord of hosts. The importance of trusting God instead of nations of the world should always be in the forefront of the minds of God's people.

Isaiah 19: Egypt Turns to the Lord?
Now Isaiah speaks even more directly against Egypt. "And I will stir up Egyptians against Egyptians, and they will fight, each against another and each against his neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom." Egypt had long been a

thorn in Israel's side, but now the tables would be turned "And the land of Judah will become a terror to the Egyptians." Yet in bringing judgment, Isaiah indicates that Egypt would turn to the Lord. "And the Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day and worship with sacrifice and offering, and they will make vows to the Lord and perform them. And the Lord will strike Egypt, striking and healing, and they will return to the Lord, and he will listen to their pleas for mercy and heal them." He also speaks of Assyria being united with Egypt and Israel and being "a blessing in the midst of the earth." How could this ever be? This appears to be closely tied to the Abrahamic promise to bless all nations, which means fulfillment is found in Jesus (see, also, Isa 2:2-4).

Isaiah 20: Do What?

Isaiah was told by the Lord, "'Go, and loose the sackcloth from your waist and take off your sandals from your feet,' and he did so, walking naked and barefoot." The Assyrians captured Ashdod (a Philistine city) and were on their way further south. Isaiah was told to walk "naked and barefoot" for three years, which would become a sign against Egypt and Cush. How so? They would be led away by the Assyrians "naked and barefoot," and those on the coastlands, like Ashdod, who had put their trust in Egypt, would be "dismayed and ashamed." Judah also needed to learn this lesson: trust God and not the nations. Trusting God is, of course, the key.

Isaiah 21: Fallen is Babylon

Isaiah refers to various places in the wilderness. Some of them are far removed from Judah. Dumah, for example, is a desert oasis between Israel and Babylon. One of the points in passages like this serves to remind the people of God that God is actually the God over all the earth. There is not a single city, oasis, or part of the wilderness over which God does not rule. Yet, with all of the somewhat obscure references, the real message is, again, that Babylon will fall. As in chapters 13 and 14, Isaiah looks ahead to the time of the Babylonian captivity and reminds the people of God that He will deal out justice to all of her enemies. For us, we sometimes need reminding that God rules over all, including those areas that seem so remote and distant from us.

Isaiah 22: Vision Valley

Now Isaiah gets closer to home by speaking about judgment upon Jerusalem, here called the "valley of vision" (perhaps referencing a sloping hill just outside the city, but also the idea that many revelations and visions have been given here). It appears that they are at a party of some kind, but do not realize the danger they are in. God's people would also face a day of the Lord. Shebna was an important figure in Hezekiah's court, but he was taking glory for himself and will be replaced by Eliakim. One might recognize that Jesus used this passage in His address to the church at Philadelphia (Rev 3:7). Ultimately, it is Jesus who opens and shuts and judges.

Isaiah 23: Against Tyre

The Phoenicians come under God's judgment here. As a city filled with pompous pride (v. 9), and whose trading by sea was renowned, Tyre would also be brought down. Tyre is likened to a forgotten prostitute who goes about the city trying to gain attention. Tyre would prostitute itself out to the world, but in the end her riches and wealth will be relinquished to the Lord's purposes. Later, in chapters 60-61, Isaiah will speak about the wealth of the nations serving God's purposes. There is a messianic message in this, as ultimately all is brought into subjection to the rule of Christ.

Isaiah 24: The Earth is Judged

The earth comes under the curse because of sin. This is seen even in Genesis 3. Here, "The earth lies defiled under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt" (vv. 5-6). However, even though sin has left the earth a desolation, there is hope and praise to be found: "From the ends of the earth we hear songs of praise, of glory to the Righteous One" (v. 16). Through his scathing judgment on the earth, there is a glimmer of hope pointing to salvation (chapter 25 speaks to this).

Isaiah 25: God Swallows up Death

God's people knew what it meant to be defeated by their enemies. This was not because God was deficient, but because they had failed to keep the covenant. Even so, God was still faithful to them and promised that the nations around them would be judged. There was always a sense of hope in the promises of judgment. This chapter expresses that hope well, longing for that time that God would defeat the foes, swallow up death, and wipe away all tears. They just needed to be patient and wait on the Lord. He would take care of it all in His time. Ultimately, God's people can see how that in Christ, death is swallowed up in victory and that day is coming when there will be no tears. Look to Jesus for fulfillment.

Isaiah 26: Songs are Sung

Continuing the thought of salvation from the previous chapter, Isaiah speaks about the song that would be sung upon the victory of God's people. "Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock" (v. 4). When the people trusted God, they would have reason to rejoice because God is their rock. He humbles the proud nations and sees to the path of the righteous. Isaiah yearns for the Lord and for people see God's zeal. While God would judge the inhabitants of earth, Isaiah calls on the people to hide for a little time until the fury is past. Herein is a glimmer of hope expressed in resurrection terms: "Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead" (v. 19). God would bring His people back to life (cf. Ezek 37). Looking to Christ, we also see resurrection as a bedrock doctrine to which we cling.

Isaiah 27: Return to Jerusalem

Isaiah continues pointing to life after exile when Israel would be restored to God, and this ultimately points to Christ. God would punish "Leviathan," a reference to the great sea monster here representing the powers that stood opposed to God and His people (imagery used in Revelation for the dragon and beast). In that day, God once again keeps and protects His vineyard (contrast with Isaiah 5). Jacob would take root and Israel would blossom, and God's people would be atoned for. In that day, a great trumpet would be blown to call His people back so that they would "come and worship the Lord on the holy mountain at Jerusalem." God did indeed bring His people back. Now, we all may share in these blessings under Christ as we have come to the New Jerusalem!

Isaiah 28: Judgment and a Sure Foundation

While Isaiah points to a more glorious time, the leaders who helped put Israel in these difficult circumstances because of unfaithfulness are still called to account and judged. Their pride and flaunting of God's will leads to their overthrow. "The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim will be trodden underfoot." In contrast, the Lord would be "a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty to the remnant of his people" as He administers justice. God's remnant know that glory cannot come from those who reject God for their own pride. God's law would be taught, but the leaders would scarcely hear. Because of their mockery, God's word seems like gibberish to them. They thought they were beyond falling to the Assyrians (a covenant with death as if it didn't apply to them), but that covenant would fail because they were taking refuge in lies. Yet in Zion, God has laid a precious cornerstone (a passage applied to Christ in Romans 9:33 and 1 Peter 2:6). God's wisdom and counsel are indeed wonderful (v. 29). As they were told to do then, so must we today listen to Him (v. 23).

Isaiah 29: Lips Near but Hearts Far

God addresses Jerusalem as "Ariel" (lion of God or perhaps altar hearth). He would bring distress upon the city for their unfaithfulness. Nations would fight against her. Their vision has been blinded and they cannot understand. Here we find one of the most familiar quotes from Isaiah referenced by Jesus (vv. 13-14; Matt 15:8-9). The people drew near with their lips but their hearts were far from God. They went through the motions, but they did not really care. Things were turned upside down in Israel (v. 16). Yet again there was coming a time when the blind would see and God's name would once again be sanctified. This passage reminds us of how important it is to sanctify Christ in our hearts and serve Him not only in action but also in heart and mind.

Isaiah 30: Trusting in What?

Isaiah chastises those who carry out plans that did not come from God as they "add sin to sin." They went to Egypt to seek protection from Pharaoh, but this would turn to shame. Egypt's help would be worthless and empty. Their attitude was against hearing God's prophets: "Do not prophesy to us what is right." Yet this would bring further judgment against them because they refused to hear. If they wanted hope, they needed to return, for "in quietness and in trust shall be your strength." But they were not willing. Even so, God longed to be gracious

toward them, and He continued to point ahead to a future restoration when the Lord “binds up the brokenness of his people, and heals the wounds inflicted by his blow.” Then they would “have a song” and “gladness of heart,” and the Lord would cause His majestic voice to be heard and the enemies would be terror-stricken. God would yet fight for His people. He always does.

Isaiah 31: Turn to Him

God’s people, particularly the leaders, were warned about turning to other nations for help instead of trusting in God. Isaiah once again tells them, “Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the Lord!” God is the One who is wise and brings about justice and judgment. The Egyptians were but men (flesh), and they fall, who then will help? The Lord is not a man, and when He fights for Zion, He will protect and deliver it. Therefore, they are told, “Turn to him from whom people have deeply revolted, O children of Israel.” The idols of silver and gold will be cast away, and the Assyrians would indeed fall. We are all reminded here of how important to put our trust in God, not in man.

Isaiah 32: A Righteous King

God is Israel’s Protector, and the people have been foolish for not trusting in Him to deliver them from trouble. God brings about justice through a king who “will reign in righteousness.” People will understand and know. The fool will not be called noble and the scoundrel will not be considered honorable, for God brings these to justice. By contrast, “he who is noble plans noble things, and on noble things he stands.” While the men who lead are normally addressed, here Isaiah also addresses the women. These perhaps would have influence with their husbands and management of the homes. The picture is like that of a harvest, and Isaiah is telling them that they needed to pay attention because “In little more than a year you will shudder.” That is, there won’t be a harvest next year. Even so, while the picture seems bleak, hope is once again provided. The lack of harvest would last “until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high.” Then there will again be justice, righteousness, and peace. This will come when people trust the Lord.

Isaiah 33: He Will Save Us!

Isaiah addresses not only God’s people who were to be judged, but also the nations that took part in destroying God’s people. God would allow these nations to bring judgment, but because of how treacherous they were, they, too, would face judgment. “Woe to you, O destroyer, while you were not destroyed; and he who is treacherous, while others did not deal treacherously with him. As soon as you finish destroying, you will be destroyed; as soon as you cease to deal treacherously, others will deal treacherously with you.” Even so, God’s people could call upon Him for salvation in the time of distress, for “The Lord is exalted, for He dwells on high; He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness. He will be the stability of your times…” Once again the contrast is made: God will be exalted while those who continued in sin would be brought to justice. We are

again reminded of how important it is to trust in God for help and salvation instead of looking to the world.

Isaiah 34: Against the Nations
The Lord stands against the nations because of their wickedness. “For My sword is satiated in heaven, behold it shall descend for judgment upon Edom and upon the people whom I have devoted to destruction.” The language of judgment permeates the chapter. “The sword of the Lord is filled with blood … For the Lord has a day of vengeance … And its land will become burning pitch. It will not be quenched night or day; Its smoke will go up forever.” When the nations stand against God, God stands against them and, ultimately, they have no ability to stand any more. The New Testament uses similar language to describe judgment against the unrighteous. We must continually consider how important it is for us to remain faithful to God and His Word.

Isaiah 35: The Redeemed will Return
God would redeem His people after they went into exile. Isaiah describes this redemption as a desert that will rejoice and blossom abundantly. They would see the glory of and splendor of God. They were then encouraged to “strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees,” a passage referenced in Hebrews 12:12. Those who were anxious were told, “Be strong; fear not!” God would come in vengeance on the enemies and He would save them. When He redeems, the eyes of the blind are opened and the ears unstopped (see Luke 4:18-19). God would provide a highway, the Way of Holiness, where the redeemed shall walk. These ransomed one would then have everlasting joy. We should see in this language pointers to Jesus, and we can share in being the redeemed who rejoice.

Isaiah 36: Whom do they trust?
Hezekiah was king of Judah, and in his fourteenth year Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came up against Hezekiah to seize Jerusalem after taking several other cities. Rabshakeh, the Assyrian military officer, came to Jerusalem with a great army. He mocked Hezekiah. He mocked God. He boasted that the Assyrians could not be defeated and even claimed that Yahweh sent him there to destroy the city. Rabshakeh told the people of Judah not to be deceived by Hezekiah into thinking that the Lord would deliver them. He promised that if they would surrender to him, then they would have their own vineyards and cisterns, grains, wine, and bread. “Beware lest Hezekiah mislead you by saying, ‘The Lord will deliver us.’ Has any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?” No one answered Rabshakeh, though because Hezekiah had told the people to keep silent. Hezekiah received word of what was being done. His response is in the next chapter. Let this chapter remind us that the world will often try to turn us against God and one another. We must continue to trust the Lord.

Isaiah 37: God Saves Hezekiah
When Hezekiah heard what the Assyrians were saying, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and went to the house of the Lord. He sent for Isaiah to see if God had

anything to say about this. Isaiah responded that the Lord said not to be afraid. He would make the king of Assyria fall by the sword in his own land. The Assyrians once again warned Hezekiah not to trust in the Lord and that no god of any nation could stop them. Hezekiah got the message and went before the Lord with it, praying, “So now, O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone are the Lord.” Isaiah sent word that God heard Hezekiah, and there was a message for Assyria, too. God promised to turn them back and defend Jerusalem. Then, “the angel of the Lord went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians.” Sennacherib did return back home, where he was soon assassinated by his own sons. No one ultimately will get away with mocking and taunting God.

Isaiah 38: A Life Spared
Hezekiah became sick and almost died. Isaiah told him to set his house in order, but then Hezekiah prayed and wept. God heard the prayer and told Hezekiah that fifteen years would be added to his life. Hezekiah then recorded what he wrote about this event after he recovered. He shows how he had little hope of surviving at first, but then expressed confidence in God’s salvation. Sometimes we need reminding that we can pour out our hearts to God when the difficulty and sorrow is greatest.

Isaiah 39: What Have They Seen?
After Hezekiah’s recovery, some envoys from Babylon came to see him. He welcomed them gladly and showed them all of his treasures. This was foolish, and Isaiah came to him and asked him what all these Babylonians saw. “They have seen all that is in my house. There is nothing in my storehouses that I did not show them.” Isaiah then gave a difficult prophecy. The days were coming when all the treasures would be carried away to Babylon. Nothing would be left, and Hezekiah’s own sons would be detrimentally affected. This would happen after Hezekiah was gone. Babylon has now seen what they would later want to take. The wheels were set in motion for later Babylonian captivity. This chapter ends the first section of Isaiah.

122. Messianic Prophecies in Isaiah

Former and latter prophets,

Yes, the prophetic messages during both the captivity of Israel (the northern kingdom) and Judah (the southern kingdom) share similar themes, primarily focusing on condemnation of idolatry and injustice, warnings of impending judgment, and calls for repentance and a return to God.

Here's a more detailed breakdown of the similarities in Prophetic Messages:

Condemnation of Idolatry and Unfaithfulness.

The prophets consistently rebuked both Israel and Judah for their worship of false gods and their unfaithfulness to the covenant with God.

Warnings of Judgment:
The warned of God's impending judgment on both kingdoms for their sins, foretelling their captivity and exile.

Call for Repentance:
The prophets urged both Israel and Judah to turn back to God, forsake their wicked ways, and obey his commandments.

Emphasis on Justice and Social Concerns:
The prophets often addressed social injustice, such as oppression of the poor and exploitation of the vulnerable, highlighting the importance of righteousness and fair treatment.

Hope for Restoration:
While the messages included warnings of judgment, they also contained elements of hope for future restoration and redemption, particularly for Judah.

Key Prophets and Their Messages:
Prophets to Israel (Northern Kingdom):
Amos: Condemned the social injustice and idolatry of the northern kingdom, foretelling its destruction.
Hosea: Warned of the consequences of Israel's unfaithfulness and called for repentance.

Prophets to Judah (Southern Kingdom):
Isaiah: Prophesied both judgment and hope for Judah, emphasizing God's faithfulness and the coming Messiah.
Micah: Condemned injustice and idolatry in Judah and called for a return to God.
Jeremiah: Prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile, but also spoke of hope for a future restoration.
Ezekiel: Prophesied during the Babylonian exile, offering messages of hope and comfort to the exiles.
Daniel: Prophesied during the Babylonian exile, offering messages of hope and comfort to the exiles.

The Captivities:
Israel's Captivity:
The northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians and taken into exile around 722 BCE.
Judah's Captivity:
The southern kingdom of Judah was conquered by the Babylonians and taken into exile in 587 BCE.

In Summary: The prophets' messages during both the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities were characterized by a consistent pattern of condemning sin, warning of judgment, and calling for repentance, ultimately pointing to the hope of God's restoration and redemption.

Why does Isaiah’s prophecy to Israel and Judah have messianic prophecies inserted in it?

Mat 1:20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. Mat 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Mat 1:22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Mat 1:23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

Isa 7:13 And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Isa 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Isa 7:15 Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. Isa 7:16 For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings. Isa 7:17 The LORD shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah; even the king of Assyria. Isa 7:18 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria.

Isa 8:14 And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Isa 8:15 And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

Rom 9:32 Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; Rom 9:33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Isa 8:22 And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness. Isa 9:1 Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. Isa 9:2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

Mat 4:14 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Mat 4:15 The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; Mat 4:16 The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. Mat 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Isa 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Isa 9:7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Isa 11:12 And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

Isa 28:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

Isa 53:5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

The rulers are carried away into captivity

Uzziah, Jotham & Ahaz
These three kings of Judah had a great impact on the preaching of the prophets sent at that time. We have seen in our own culture how leaders can affect the culture and how the people can influence those leaders. The sexual revolution led to legalized abortion, forever changing the nature of the political parties here. Later, this same sexual revolution legalized homosexuality and further changing the political parties and which has now led to homosexual marriage. Few alive before 1970 could have envisioned the impact that the culture had on the selection of leaders, how the leaders have pushed the culture, and how both of these have changed the landscape of the hearts who are now hearing the gospel.

There is nothing new under the sun, and this has happened as a cy cle since the beginning. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. ... so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God,

they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ... 24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

2Ch 26:3 Sixteen years old was Uzziah when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Jecoliah of Jerusalem. 2Ch 26:4 And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah did. 2Ch 26:5 And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper.

2Ki 15:1 In the twenty and seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel began Azariah son of Amaziah king of Judah to reign. 2Ki 15:2 Sixteen years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned two and fifty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jecholiah of Jerusalem. 2Ki 15:3 And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done; 2Ki 15:4 Save that the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burnt incense still on the high places.

Uzziah came to the throne at age 16 and reigned for 52 years. Just to complicate things, the book of king names him Azariah, *2Ki 14:21 After his death the people of Judah made his son Azariah king, even though he was only sixteen at the time. 2Ki 14:22 Azariah was the one who later recaptured and rebuilt the town of Elath.* Azariah means the “Lord Helps” and Uzziah means the ”Lord Strengthens”.

He was a good king, but I suspect he was greatly assisted by Zechariah, not the prophet which came much later, but by a good advisor to Uzziah’s father, *2Ch 26:5 Zechariah was Uzziah's advisor and taught him to obey God. And so, as long as Zechariah was alive, Uzziah was faithful to God, and God made him successful.*

All the prophets with the exception of Micah began their work in the days of Uzziah and continued through the reign of Hezekiah. It will be clear from the accounts of their lives the difficulties they worked against.

Amos... in the days of Uzziah of Judah, Jeroboam of Israel, Amos 1:1
Hosea ... in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, of Judah, Jeroboam of Israel Hos 1:1
Isaiah ... in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Isa 1:1
Micah ... in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, Mic 1:1
Uzziah/Amaziah
Azaryah'. helped by Jehovah

Uzz'iyah, strength of Jehovah but in the prolonged form Uzziya'hu,(from McClintock & Strong).

Uzziah was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecholiah of Jerusalem. 4 And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. 5 He sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God; and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper. Chron 26:3-5

In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Azariah the son of Amaziah, king of Judah, became king. 2 He was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. 2Kings 15:1-2

Since he is called Uzziah in the prophets, we will stay with that name, and since this name is used in Chronicles, which is a much more specific account of his life, we will work out Chronicles. He begins his reign at 16, and although we are not given any further information, while he was under the guidance of a prophet named Zechariah, he sought God and God made him prosper. Whether this lasted most of his life or only a short time is not recorded. God made him to Prosper While under the guidance of Zechariah, still seeking God, he went to war against the Philistines and won a great battle and God greatly blessed him.

Now he went out and made war against the Philistines, and broke down the wall of Gath, the wall of
Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod; and he built cities around Ashdod and among the Philistines. 7 God
helped him against the Philistines, against the Arabians who lived in Gur Baal, and against the Meunites. 8 Also the Ammonites brought tribute to Uzziah. His fame spread as far as the entrance of Egypt, for he became exceedingly strong. 2 Chron 26:6-8 And he made devices in Jerusalem, invented by skillful men, to be on the towers and the corners, to shoot arrows and large stones. So his fame spread far and wide, for he was marvelously helped till he became strong. 2 Chron 26:15

Uzziah’s Pride
Clearly after the death of Zechariah, Uzziah’s false estimate of his own power and ability led him to go against God’s law. He wanted to do the work of the priest and thus entered into the temple with a censer. But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the LORD his God by entering the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. 17 So Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him were eighty priests of the LORD — valiant men. 18 And they withstood King Uzziah, and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have trespassed! You shall have no honor from the LORD God." 19 Then Uzziah became furious; and he had a censer in his hand to burn

incense. 2 Chr. 26:16-19 Because of this pride, he sinned and entered the temple. When the priest went in to warn him about his sin, instead of being contrite and repentant he became angry. God did nothing when he entered the temple, but when he was still stubborn in his rebellion after being rebuked, God intervened with punishment. And while he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead, before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the incense altar. 20 And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and there, on his forehead, he was leprous; so they thrust him out of that place. Indeed he also hurried to get out, because the LORD had struck him. 2Chr. 26:19-20

The punishment was swift and final. He was definitely humbled at this moment, but there was no longer any room for repentance and he remained a leper for the rest of his life. King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death. He dwelt in an isolated house, because he was a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD. Then Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land. 2Chr. 26:21

Other than this one event, nothing else is written, so we have to fall back on the summary of his life in Kings, that he did what was right. And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done, 4 except that the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places. 2 Kings 15:3-5

Isaiah’s Call

It was in the year that Uzziah died that Isaiah received his call. From the events in this call, we get a good assessment of the conditions in Judah as Uzziah’s 52 year reign came to a close. In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. 2 Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one cried to another and said: "Holy,holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" 4 And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 So I said: "Woe is
me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts." 6 Then one of the seraphim flew 2
to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. 7 And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged." 8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me." 9 And He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' 10 "Make the heart of this people dull, And their ears heavy, And shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be healed." 11 Then I said, "Lord, how long?" And He answered: "Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, The houses are without a

man, The land is utterly desolate, 12 The LORD has removed men far away, And the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.

Jotham
Since Jotham had been helping his father from the time of he was struck with leprosy, and he was 25 when he began to reign at the death of his father, it appears it was late in Uzziah's reign that this occurred. Jotham was a good king, but did not stop the corruption of the people.

Jotham was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jerushah the daughter of Zadok. 2 And he did what was right in the sight of
the LORD , according to all that his father Uzziah had done (although he did not enter the temple of the LORD). But still the people acted corruptly. 2Chr. 27:1-2

His reign was prosperous and busy and God blessed him in his work because he prepared his ways before the Lord. He built the Upper Gate of the house of the LORD , and he built extensively on the wall of Ophel. 4 Moreover he built cities in the mountains of Judah, and in the forests he built fortresses and towers.5 He also fought with the king of the Ammonites and defeated them. And the people of Ammon gave him in that year one hundred talents of silver, ten thousand kors of wheat, and ten thousand of barley. The people of Ammon paid this to him in the second and third years also. 6 So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God. 2 Chron 27:3-6

Yet in spite of his reign and God's blessings, the people still had the terrible heart He had revealed to Isaiah. At this time, God began to punish Isreal.

Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 37 In those days the LORD began to send Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah against Judah. 38 So Jotham rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David his father. Then Ahaz his son reigned in his place. 2Kings 15:36-38

Ahaz
Ahaz was twenty when he began his reign and he was more interested in the lifestyle of those he lived among than what God had revealed in His law.

Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and he
did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord, as his father David had done. 2 For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made molded images for the Baals. 3 He burned incense in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. 4 And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree. 2 Chron 28:1-4

God sent adversaries
God was attempting to do for Judah what he had done throughout the time of the judges. He sent adversaries who would bring Judah to their senses. It failed with Ahaz because he allied himself with the king of Assyria. Then Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to make war; and they besieged Ahaz but could not overcome him. 6 At that time Rezin king of Syria captured Elath for Syria, and drove the men of Judah from Elath. Then the Edomites* went to Elath, and dwell there to this day. 2 Kings 16:5-6

So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, saying, "I am your servant and your son. Come up and save me from the hand of the king of Syria and from the hand of the king of Israel, who
rise up against me." 8 And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the Lord , and in the treasuries of the king's house, and sent it as a present to the king of Assyria. 9 So the king of Assyria heeded him; for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus and took it, carried its people captive to Kir, and killed Rezin. 2 Kings 16:7-9

Ahaz builds a new altar
After meeting with the king of Assyria and seeing the altar they used to worship their idols, he gives
a command to get the plans, remove the altar God had revealed to Israel and replace it with his heathen altar. Now King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, and saw an altar that was at Damascus; and King Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the design of the altar and its pattern, according to all its workmanship. 11 Then Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus. So Urijah the priest made it before King Ahaz came back from Damascus. 2 Kings16:10-12

He also brought the bronze altar which was before the Lord , from the front of the temple — from between the new altar and the house of the Lord — and put it on the north side of the new altar. 15
Then King Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, "On the great new altar burn the morning burnt offering, the evening grain offering, the king's burnt sacrifice, and his grain offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land, their grain offering, and their drink offerings; and sprinkle on it all the blood of the burnt offering and all the blood of the sacrifice. And the bronze altar shall be for me to inquire by." 2 Kings 16:14-16

Great evil in Judah.
Now in the time of his distress King Ahaz became increasingly unfaithful to the Lord. This is that King
Ahaz. 23 For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus which had defeated him, saying, "Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me." But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel. 2 Chron 28:22-24

123. False Worship

There is nothing to my mind more serious, treacherous, deceitful and shameful, than worship that is clouded by false beliefs. It is one thing to hold falsehoods yourself and it is another to mislead the simple people who follow you, thinking that you must be right because you are in a position of power, but to make clear what these religious people are, the Lord calls them “Sodomites and Gomorrites”.

The Lord rebukes Judah and Jerusalem after this fashion, *Isa 1:10 Hear the word of the LORD, ye **rulers of Sodom**; give ear unto the law of our God, ye **people of Gomorrah**. Isa 1:11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. Isa 1:12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Isa 1:13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Isa 1:14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. Isa 1:15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood*.

Jehovah Jesus calls them “rulers of Sodom” and “people of Gomorrah”, and that is what false worshippers are to Him, that is what Jerusalem and Judea have become. And we all in the church ought to take serious heed of what He says, and not think that we are absolved any responsibility because we say that we have “believed in Jesus”, because we might just be among that group who have totally misunderstood salvation. The Jews were given regulations about how Jehovah Jesus expected to be worshiped and while they partially conformed to the externals, the offerings, sacrifices and feasts, the internals of religion which drove them were all wrong, *Isa 1:16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Isa 1:17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow*. Did not James say, *Jas 1:27 Religion that pleases God the Father must be pure and spotless. You must help needy orphans and widows and not let this world make you evil*. CEV.

What about those professing to be Christians? There is little guidance given on how we are to worship God in the period of the New Testament, after the resurrection. In fact the biggest piece of advice is given by Jesus at the end of the Old Testament, *Joh 4:19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Joh 4:20 Our fathers **worshipped** in this mountain; and ye say,*

that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to ***worship****. Joh 4:21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem,* ***worship*** *the Father. Joh 4:22 Ye* ***worship*** *ye know not what: we know what we* ***worship****: for salvation is of the Jews. Joh 4:23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the* ***true worshippers*** *shall* ***worship*** *the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to* ***worship*** *him. Joh 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that* ***worship*** *him must worship him in spirit and in truth*.

Jesus implies that those who are saved know what they worship, "*Ye* ***worship*** *ye know not what: we know what we* ***worship****: for salvation is of the Jews".* Apart from the statement that "*they that* ***worship*** *him must worship him in spirit and in truth"*, it would seem that there is little written about the fashion of that worship in the early New Testment. What is clear is that they did not follow the Old Testament forms of worship.

So how did we, get from the period of the New Testament, a period where people didn't put bricks together to form a building for worship, but put people back together to form a spiritual temple to where we are today? The New Testament where worship consisted of contributions from all believers, to a worship regulated by elders, bishops, pastors and none from the rest of the believers? The New Testament, where external duties were concerned with the discipleship and training in the faith, to a social community where people are occupied with food banks, welfare, old peoples lunches, coffee mornings so that the people do not see Christ for the activities which are going on? Is this what Jesus had in mind when He said, "*they that* ***worship*** *him must worship him in spirit and in truth"*.

Just because the forms and structures associated with our worship have been around for many years, does not mean that they are Biblical or correct. If we do not question why we have what we have, and go on blindly taking for granted the things around us, we shall be guilty of gross ignorance and negligence. I wouldn't trust a man who worships in darkness because I know who is leading him, satan. And before you say its not important precisely how we worship God, and we can all express ourselves in different ways, are we not forgetting that the apostle Paul taught us about UNITY of faith not about a divergent, composite faith, a syncretistic multifaceted faith.

God gave certain men gifts, by which they conformed other men to Christ and made them effective ministers and missioners of the gospel assembly, *Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Eph 4:13* ***Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:*** *Eph 4:14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and*

cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; Eph 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

We are in consequence growing together and whatever contributes to this **Unity**, this maturity, this stability of doctrine, this ability to see through the deceiver, is what makes the church of Christ strong and decisive. There is no room for a denomination, because a denomination speaks of division and is not of Christ, so the idea of separating into different factions was not Christ's idea but man's. What should you do? Do you go to an established church and just hope you have made a good choice or do you just meet with people who call themselves Christians and over time form a bond of fellowship? Think about it because your future depends upon it.

"Religion that pleases God the Father must be pure and spotless. You must help needy orphans and widows and not let this world make you evil". Does that accurately describe Christianity and worship? I don't think so? There is so much clutter that we cannot even see what we are doing or are supposed to do. We have inherited denominations which the believer fails to question and few know how it got to its position today and even where it came from. They are like homes which pass from generation to generation, each in turn picking up the litter and cumulative belongings of its past occupants. The artefacts from previous generations have lost their meaning and purpose in the mist of time, yet we cannot part with it, although we don't know what it is for. We esteem the past that men have made, because it is old, not for how it works or how relevant it is to us.

We are thrust upon by the ignorant, fostering traditions which they know nothing about, and we are expected to swallow it, hook, line and sinker without a moments thought. The blind leading the blind. I know this is how people react because I was one of them. No wonder God says to the people, *Isa 1:21 How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Isa 1:22 Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: Isa 1:23 Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them*. I know that many leaders in churches do not believe what they allege to support and I cite this paper,

> New research shows a stunning lack of basic biblical beliefs among Christian pastors across all U.S. denominations, according to veteran researcher George Barna and the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University. An earlier report from the American Worldview Inventory 2022 showed that just 37% of Christian pastors have a biblical worldview, with the predominant worldview among pastors (62%) being syncretism, a hybrid mixture of disparate worldview elements blended into a customized philosophy of life.

According to this latest report, the widespread absence of biblical worldview among American pastors is resulting in eroding beliefs in areas as basic as salvation through Jesus Christ, the nature of God, the sinful condition of human beings, and the existence of objective truth. As Barna notes, “Our survey demonstrates that large numbers of pastors have abandoned even the most basic and hallowed biblical teachings for ideas that now permeate our culture.” And this has enormous negative consequences for American Christianity, according to Barna. “Because pastors teach what they believe, many churches are becoming centers of syncretism and secular thought,” he said. “Perhaps without even realizing it, thousands of pastors have become leaders of a movement away from God.” “With so many churches and their pastors in the culture’s grip, rather than fervently committed to serving God and teaching His word,” Barna explained, “you can clearly see why most church-going Christians are being more influenced by the culture than the culture is being influenced by America’s Christians.”

Arizona Christian University (ACU) President Len Munsil noted that the findings point to the need for a renewed commitment within the church, and especially among Christian colleges and universities, to focus on the basics of the faith. “Obviously, we can’t assume that this next generation has a solid understanding of biblical basics,” Munsil said. “They’re incredibly influenced by culture, and now the research shows us that church youth groups are often led by pastors who lack basic biblical understanding. At ACU, we’re committed to helping our students develop a biblical worldview and deepening their biblical beliefs to guide how they live their lives.”

This latest report from the American World View Inventory (AWVI) 2022 looks at 17 basic beliefs, including salvation through Jesus Christ, moral and biblical truth, human purpose, the value of human life, and other foundational biblical issues, among pastors in the nation’s seven major denominational groupings. The report found that pastors serving non-denominational and independent Protestant churches were by far the most likely to embrace basic biblical principles. Lowest levels of biblical belief were found among pastors of holiness and traditionally black churches. Surprisingly low numbers of biblical beliefs were held by pastors in evangelical churches. Amazingly, given the biblical foundations of evangelicalism, three out of every 10 (30%) do not believe that their salvation is based on having confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their saviour. According to the report, more than one-third believe that there is no absolute moral truth, deny that human life is sacred, and say that having faith matters more than which faith you have.

> The report also found an unexpectedly large percentage of pastors, regardless of their title or position or denominational affiliation, reject biblical teaching on a wide range of issues. The least biblically centered pastors, by a substantial margin, are those who serve as executive pastors, teaching pastors, and children's or youth pastors. Although 41% of senior and lead pastors have a biblical worldview (the highest among all pastoral positions), unexpectedly substantial proportions hold beliefs that are in conflict with the Bible on a range of teachings.
>
> Specifically, the report found that one-third or more of senior pastors believe:
>
> - Sexual relations between two unmarried people who believe they love each other is morally acceptable.
> - Determining moral truth is up to each individual; there are no moral absolutes that apply to everyone, all the time.
> - The Holy Spirit is not a living entity, but is a symbol of God's power, presence, or purity.
> - Having faith matters more than which faith you have.
> - Reincarnation is a real possibility.
> - A person who is generally good, or does enough good things for others, can earn a place in Heaven.
> - Socialism is preferable to capitalism.
> - Allowing property ownership facilitates economic injustice.
> - The Bible is ambiguous in its teaching about abortion, enabling you to make a strong argument either for or against abortion based on biblical principles.
>
> Additionally, one-third or more of senior pastors reject the following beliefs: human life is sacred; wealth is entrusted to individuals to be managed for God's purposes; success is consistent obedience to God; people are born into sin and can only be saved from its consequences by Jesus Christ; they, personally, will experience eternal salvation only because they have personally confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

Yet here they go, week after week, pretending that their faith is going to dig them out of judgement instead of digging their grave. They are utterly deceived and what they consider worship is a selfish desire to fulfil their pleasure, to see God working for them, what they can get rather than service to the Lord. And because there is little dialogue between the people who attend these services, the congregation, they can quietly go on without contradiction. There is no group chat about what they believe partly because all the pews face the front, not towards one another, and the "speech" is given by a paid hireling, and you can take it or leave what he says, without affecting what you believe, and no one will ever know, except the Lord. Anyway religion is a private and personal matter,

they say. The history of Israel is punctuated by a phrase, “did what was right in their own eyes”, and that is why we have the churches we do.

Religion will keep going and garner large numbers as long as you do not have to discuss what you believe. When you do have to defend your beliefs then the differences appear, the splits and cracks in your religion start to appear, the unity goes, because there is not the unifying factor, that is, Christ and His word. We have been exposed as rebels, worse than brute animals, for at least they know who it is that feeds them.

In concentrating upon the false worship, Isaiah gets to the root of the problem. Yes, there is more to come in lots of other areas, but it is in this fundamental area of worship that the rot sets in. If we do not express ourselves to the Lord Almighty as He wishes to be worshipped, we today are guilty with Israel of old, *Isa 1:2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have* ***rebelled against me****. Isa 1:3* ***The ox knoweth his owner****, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Isa 1:4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward*.

They are practicing Sodomites in the eyes of the Lord.

124. Clearing Out The Rubbish

I often wonder why people who do not believe in Jesus, those who reject His Divinity, virgin birth, resurrection, the Bible stories such as the Ark on Noah, Adam and Eve, Jonah and the great Fish, etc, spend time going to church and pretending that they are Christians and those in particular have the affront to go into “Christian” ministry . It seems incredible, but as we saw, “**An earlier report from the American Worldview Inventory 2022 showed that just 37% of Christian pastors have a biblical worldview, with the predominant worldview among pastors (62%) being syncretism, a hybrid mixture of disparate worldview elements blended into a customized philosophy of life**”, in other words, a majority don’t believe but they still try to hold on to religious life.

They are just like Judah, who Isaiah describes as, *Isa 1:4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger,* ***they are gone away backward****. Isa 1:5 Why should ye be stricken anymore? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. Isa 1:6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed,*

neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Isa 1:7 Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. Isa 1:8 And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.

I can only suppose that the religious people who do not believe the truth, are motivated by a need to express some deep felt, but undirected form of worship. This would be entirely what we would expect, since man was created to serve and worship God. With the intervention of sin, God removing Himself from man, and the devil corrupting and misleading man, it all goes terribly wrong, *Deu 32:16 You made God jealous and angry by* ***worshiping disgusting idols and foreign gods****. Deu 32:17 You offered sacrifices to demons, those useless gods that never helped you, new gods that your ancestors never worshiped. Deu 32:18 You turned away from God, your Creator; you forgot the Mighty Rock, the source of your life*. CEV.

Idolatry and superstition spring from this, *Jer 10:1*The LORD said: Listen to me, you people of Israel. Jer 10:2 Don't follow the customs of those nations who become frightened when they see something strange happen in the sky. Jer 10:3 Their religion is worthless! They chop down a tree, carve the wood into an idol, Jer 10:4 cover it with silver and gold, and then nail it down so it won't fall over. Jer 10:5 An idol is no better than a scarecrow. It can't speak, and it has to be carried, because it can't walk. Why worship an idol that can't help or harm you? Jer 10:6 Our LORD, great and powerful, you alone are God*. CEV.

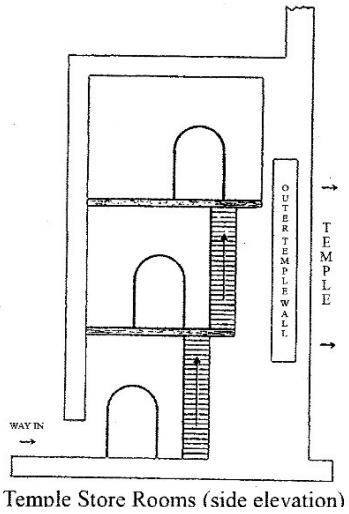
This superstition is gathered together in the buildings and forms of worship that man invents, and man their maker imbues them with qualities which they do not have, like calling them “sacred spaces”. This blurb comes from a church architecture firm,

> Coming together in worship to express shared beliefs to strengthen one’s own faith and to spread God’s message to others is the central purpose for which any church is formed. So, rightfully, a beautiful, high quality, and appropriate Sanctuary for worship must anchor any church campus.
>
> Yet, today’s church campuses consist of much more than just a traditional sanctuary. To attract and retain families as well as provide effective community outreach, today’s churches must have facilities for education, fellowship, and recreational activities for both youth and adults, in addition to accommodating worship services that may come in multiple forms ranging from traditional to contemporary. The result is a need for more extensive facilities with much greater flexibility.

.....and more architects and more ideas about putting the church right with invented problems. It does put Jesus words in the shade, *Joh 4:23 But a time is*

coming, and it is already here! Even now the true worshipers are being led by the Spirit to worship the Father according to the truth. These are the ones the Father is seeking to worship him. Joh 4:24 God is Spirit, and those who worship God must be led by the Spirit to worship him according to the truth. CEV. They really have turned the building into a place of merchandise.

When Josiah began his reforms in Israel, they got around to refurbishing the Temple, *2Ch 34:12 The workers were honest, and their supervisors were Jahath and Obadiah from the Levite clan of Merari, and Zechariah and Meshullam from the Levite clan of Kohath. Other Levites, who were all skilled musicians, 2Ch 34:13 were in charge of carrying supplies and supervising the workers. Other Levites were appointed to stand guard around the temple. 2Ch 34:14 While the money was being given to these supervisors, Hilkiah found the book that contained the laws that the LORD had given to Moses. 2Ch 34:15 Hilkiah handed the book to Shaphan the official and said, "Look what I found here in the temple —The Book of God's Law."* CEV.



Temple Store Rooms (side elevation)

The Temple was built with store rooms around its sides, with three floors, *1Ki 6:5 Along the sides and back of the temple, there were three levels of storage rooms. The rooms on the bottom level were seven and a half feet wide, the rooms on the middle level were nine feet wide, and those on the top level were ten and a half feet wide. There were ledges on the outside of the temple that supported the beams of the storage rooms, so that nothing was built into the temple walls.* CEV. It was very similar to the Ark of Noah.

You can imagine that over time it got stuffed with all manner of things and it became a “come in handy” space where you didn’t throw this away in case they came in handy at some stage later on. Some time prior to Josiah, they thought that they didn’t need God’s word anymore, they were far too sophisticated to need that old book, and they thought they could do worship themselves without any guidance. It is very much what we see today with people doing, all manner of things that they think will please God, and they have no reference at all to the word of God.

The stuff that somebody in the past stored and loved, becomes a mystery to us. “Why on earth did they keep this”, you say, and it gets pushed to the back in a dark corner where it gathers dust. That tells you how much they valued this artefact, the Word of God, and neglect led to forgetting, and forgetting led to a complete loss of memory as to why it even existed. Well they found it and were

horrified, *2Ch 34:19 When Josiah heard what was in The Book of God's Law, he tore his clothes in sorrow. 2Ch 34:20 At once he called together Hilkiah, Shaphan, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Abdon son of Micah, and his own servant Asaiah. He said, 2Ch 34:21 "The LORD must be furious with me and everyone else in Israel and Judah, because our ancestors did not obey the laws written in this book.* ***Go find out what the LORD wants us to do****."* CEV. A cry for guidance which is sadly lacking today.

You can either get the stuff out of the Temple and sort out what is Biblically necessary, and throw the junk away or you can just rearrange what you find. You can either have a reformation or a rearrangement, where you basically have the same old, same old in a different order. You might also import stuff which has no Biblical relevance, but God's way is a house clearance, *Jer 7:8 But just look at what is happening! You put your trust in worthless lies. Jer 7:9 You steal and murder; you lie in court and are unfaithful in marriage. You worship idols and offer incense to Baal, when these gods have never done anything for you. Jer 7:10 And then you come into my temple and worship me! Do you think I will protect you so that you can go on sinning? Jer 7:11 You are thieves, and you have made my temple your hideout. But I've seen everything you have done. Jer 7:12 Go to Shiloh, where my sacred tent once stood. Take a look at what I did there. My people Israel sinned, and so I destroyed Shiloh*! CEV.

Jerusalem has become an "old tart*", Isa 1:21 How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Isa 1:22 Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water*: it has adulterated everything, it has devalued the currency mixing its silver with dross, and cheapened the wine by watering it down. Judah and Jerusalem, by which I think is meant, the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem, seem to have no hope, no way out, but there is a glimmer of hope, *Isa 1:8 And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Isa 1:9 Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small* ***remnant****, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah*.

Then just as it seems their plight is hopeless, there is an intermission, *Isa 2:1 The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Isa 2:2* ***And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.*** *Isa 2:3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. Isa 2:4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. Isa 2:5 O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD*.

This intermission is inserted between the woes coming upon Judah and Jerusalem, where the Lord continues on after to berate the nation. Why does Jehovah Jesus do this? Why give them hope if you are going to destroy them? They do the things that they do because they can do no other, because they are blind and deaf, *Isa 6:9 Then the Lord said, "Go and tell the people, 'Listen closely, but don't understand. Look closely, but don't learn.' Isa 6:10 Confuse them.* ***Make them unable to understand what they hear and see****. If you don't do this, they might really look with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their minds. Then they might come back to me and be healed!" Isa 6:11 Then I asked, "Lord, how long should I do this?" He answered, "Do this until the cities are destroyed and all the people are gone. Do this until there is no one left living in the houses and the land is destroyed and empty." Isa 6:12 The LORD will make the people go far away, and there will be large areas of empty land in the country*. ERV.

This is quoted by Jesus in Matthews Gospel, *Mat 13:13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. Mat 13:14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: Mat 13:15* ***For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them***.

The lost are lost, unresponsive to the things of God, so in view of this, the prophecy of Isaiah will naturally fall on deaf ears and stony ground. It will not be seen or heard by a majority of the people, because it will seem as foolishness to them, *1Co 2:12 We received the Spirit that is from God, not the spirit of the world. We received God's Spirit so that we can know all that God has given us. 1Co 2:13 When we say this, we don't use words taught to us by human wisdom. We use words taught to us by the Spirit. We use the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths. 1Co 2:14 People who do not have God's Spirit do not accept the things that come from his Spirit.* ***They think these things are foolish****. They cannot understand them, because they can only be understood with the Spirit's help.* ERV. Just like today, men scoff at God’s word because they cannot understand it.

Well who is it written for? It is written for **the remnant**, the dead elect if you will. They are the people who will take the message into their hearts and will live. They are the “good seed”, *Mat 13:23 The seeds that fell on good ground are the people who hear and understand the message. They produce as much as a hundred or sixty or thirty times what was planted*. CEV. They are the branches of the olive tree which symbolises “all Israel”, *Rom 11:22 Now you see both how kind and how hard God can be. He was hard on those who fell, but he was kind to you.* ***And he will keep on being kind to you, if you keep on trusting in his kindness****. Otherwise, you will be cut away too. Rom 11:23 If those other*

branches will start having faith, they will be made a part of that tree again. God has the power to put them back. Rom 11:24 After all, it wasn't natural for branches to be cut from a wild olive tree and to be made part of a cultivated olive tree. So it is much more likely that God will join the natural branches back to the cultivated olive tree. CEV.

The remnant are the people who are joined to Christ, *Joh 15:4 Stay joined to me, and I will stay joined to you. Just as a branch cannot produce fruit unless it stays joined to the vine, you cannot produce fruit unless you stay joined to me. Joh 15:5 I am the vine, and you are the branches. If you stay joined to me, and I stay joined to you, then you will produce lots of fruit. But you cannot do anything without me*. CEV.

The remnant are the super conquerors, *Rom 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Rom 8:36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Rom 8:37 Nay**, **in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.** Rom 8:38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Rom 8:39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

But it does not say that the remnant will escape the troubles that God will bring upon the wicked, but the will be preserved unto His kingdom. They will be collateral damage in the coming tribulations but, *Joh 16:33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: **but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world***.

The young Christians think that they will be safe from every ill, but the mature Christian has seen the course of the Master Jesus, and he realises he may have to tread the same path.

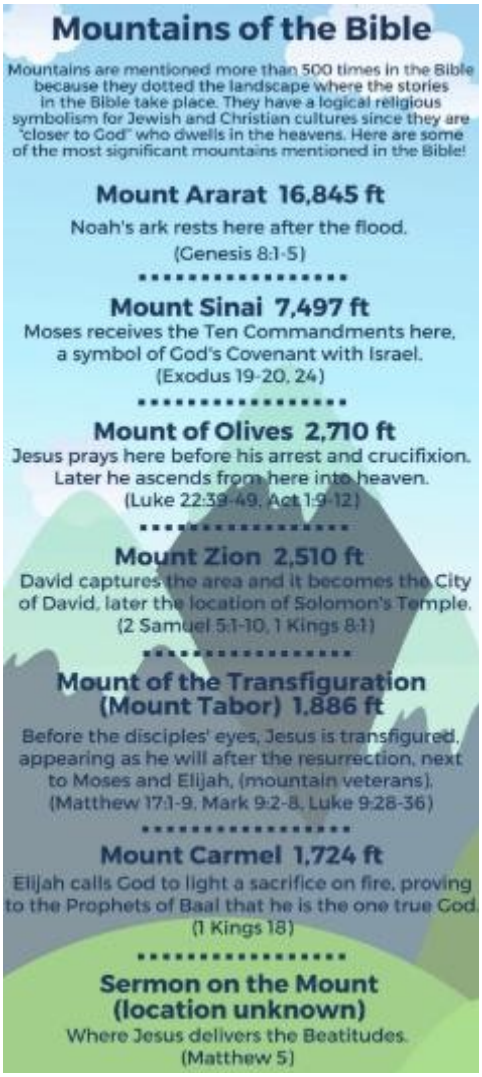
125. The Mountain of the Lord

Preparatory reading: Isaiah Chapter 2

*Isa 2:1The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Isa 2:2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that **the mountain of the LORD'S house** shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. Isa 2:3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to **the mountain of the LORD**, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. Isa 2:4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall*

rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. Isa 2:5 O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.

When you read chapters 1 though to 5 of the Book of Isaiah, it is a bit like an abstract that you use to sum up a large document. It contains the essential truth of the whole document, and you get a flavour of what the document is all about. We saw in among the judgements upon Jerusalem and Judah, a paragraph talking of the Mountain of the Lord, which seemed so incongruous amid all the statements that it nestles amongst, since it was giving the people a hope, such as the contemporary prophet Hosea gives to Israel, *Hos 2:14 Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. Hos 2:15 And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and* ***the valley of Achor for a door of hope****: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. Hos 2:16 And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali*.


Mountains of the Bible
Mountains are mentioned more than 500 times in the Bible because they dotted the landscape where the stories in the Bible take place. They have a logical religious symbolism for Jewish and Christian cultures since they are "closer to God" who dwells in the heavens. Here are some of the most significant mountains mentioned in the Bible!
Mount Ararat 16,845 ft
Noah's ark rests here after the flood.
(Genesis 8:1-5)
Mount Sinai 7,497 ft
Moses receives the Ten Commandments here, a symbol of God's Covenant with Israel.
(Exodus 19-20, 24)
Mount of Olives 2,710 ft
Jesus prays here before his arrest and crucifixion. Later he ascends from here into heaven.
(Luke 22:39-49, Act 1:9-12)
Mount Zion 2,510 ft
David captures the area and it becomes the City of David, later the location of Solomon's Temple.
(2 Samuel 5:1-10, 1 Kings 8:1)
Mount of the Transfiguration (Mount Tabor) 1,886 ft
Before the disciples' eyes, Jesus is transfigured, appearing as he will after the resurrection, next to Moses and Elijah, (mountain veterans).
(Matthew 17:1-9, Mark 9:2-8, Luke 9:28-36)
Mount Carmel 1,724 ft
Elijah calls God to light a sacrifice on fire, proving to the Prophets of Baal that he is the one true God.
(1 Kings 18)
Sermon on the Mount (location unknown)
Where Jesus delivers the Beatitudes.
(Matthew 5)

These verses are like the jam between two biscuits. They are hope, like the sun breaking through the dark clouds, anticipating a better day. As that wonderful hymn, "Praise to The Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation" says, "Praise to the Lord, who when darkness and sin are abounding, who when the godless are rampant, all goodness confounding, shines with his light, scatters the terror of night, safely his people surrounding."

Remember that at the time of writing, the Temple at Jerusalem is still standing and will stand for another 150 years. The reforms issued by king Josiah are still a 100 years away. So talking about, "*that* ***the mountain of the LORD'S house*** *shall be established in the top of the mountains"* seems to be describing an alternative house, *Isa 2:2 And it will come about in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord will be placed on the top of the mountains, and be lifted up over the hills; and all nations will come to it*. The Hebrew word, establish is כּוּן which means to erect or set up. Solomon prepared timber for his temple, *1Ki 5:18 And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew them, and the stonesquarers: so they prepared* כּוּן *timber and stones to build the house*.

All of this "word the Isaiah saw", takes place in another day, the last days, the future days, on a mountain that is "on top of the mountains", which suggests that it is in altitude, above the then existing city of Jerusalem. But is this true and

is the “House” that will be established, an entirely new house, or is it poetic language which is describing the Temple in Jerusalem in later days? It is I think different from the bricks and stone building that exists in the days of Isaiah, and we know from the days of king Josiah, 100 years in the future, it will need refurbishing. But it got destroyed by the Babylonians, rebuilt after a fashion by Zerubbabel and Ezra, re-rebuilt by king Herod in the days of Jesus, and flattened for the final time in AD 70. Any House of God must be a total new one.

The next question is, “who builds it or establishes the House or Temple?” Both the House and the Temple are connected, *2Co 6:16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for **ye are the temple** of the living God; as God hath said, **I will dwell in them**, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people*..... *2Co 6:16 How can God's temple come to terms with pagan idols? For we are the temple of the living God! As God himself has said, "**I will make my home with my people** and live among them; I will be their God, and they shall be my people."* GNB. From, *Exo 29:45 And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God*. The Temple is the sacred place where God’s chosen people live, in the House of God.

When Solomon built the Temple and filled it with the Holy things, it was also called the House of the Lord, 1 Ki *7:48 And Solomon made all the vessels that pertained unto the **house of the LORD**: the altar of gold, and the table of gold, whereupon the shewbread was, 1Ki 7:49 And the candlesticks of pure gold, five on the right side, and five on the left, before the oracle, with the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs of gold, 1Ki 7:50 And the bowls, and the snuffers, and the basons, and the spoons, and the censers of pure gold; and the hinges of gold, both for the doors of the inner house, the most holy place, and **for the doors of the house, to wit, of the temple**. 1Ki 7:51 So was ended all the work that king Solomon made for **the house of the LORD**. And Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated; even the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, did he put among the treasures of the house of the LORD*. It was the forever home of the Psalmist David, *Psa 23:6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and **I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever***.

It was clear that God had ordained a place for His people to live, *Joh 14:1 Jesus said to his disciples, "Don't be worried! Have faith in God and have faith in me. Joh 14:2 **There are many rooms in my Father's house.** I wouldn't tell you this, unless it was true. I am going there to prepare a place for each of you. Joh 14:3 After I have done this, I will come back and take you with me. Then we will be together.* CEV. This wasn’t on earth, because Jesus ascended into heaven, from which he will return.

All of the types of the Temple were built by man, Noah’s Ark, the Tabernacle in the wilderness, the Temple of Solomon, and the exact dimensions were given by God to the artificer who built it. He gave the plans from the reality which existed in the **mountain**, in **heaven**, *Exo 25:8 And let them make me a sanctuary; that I*

may dwell among them. Exo 25:9 According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it…….. Heb 8:5 Who serve unto the example and ***shadow of heavenly things****, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee* ***in the mount****.*

The true Tabernacle or Temple had its reality in heaven, and it must have already existed in heaven before the earthly copies, or else how could it be accurately reproduced on earth. Secondly, the earthly Temple was standing in Jerusalem, while God was speaking of this "other" Temple in His holy Mountain. There are two Temples at the same time!

In the Bible, the Temple is often seen as a picture or representation of the Lord's people in heaven, with the earthly Temple serving as a symbolic model of the heavenly sanctuary where God ultimately dwells with his people; essentially, the temple signifies the presence of God among his followers, both on earth and in the heavenly realm, but the earthly people do not necessarily go from the earthly to the heavenly. The objects which are the reality are not those things on earth, the Ark of the covenant, the Tabernacle, the golden objects, they are just a man made shadow of the reality which casts the shadow, *Heb 8:5 But the tent where they serve is just* ***a copy and a shadow*** *of the real one in heaven. Before Moses made the tent, he was told, "Be sure to make it exactly like the pattern you were shown on the mountain!"* CEV.

This was the place where Isaiah said all people would go, "***the mountain of the LORD'S house*** *shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it".* Not only the Jews but also the Gentiles, the גוים *Isa 2:2 And it shall come to pass in the last of the days or times, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be confirmed as the head of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills; and* ***all the Gentiles*** *shall flow unto it.* Jubilee.

They would no longer fight one another in that heavenly place, they would no longer be at war, "***they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation****,* ***neither shall they learn war any more"***. This is a remarkable statement considering the time that Isaiah lived in. War was de rigueur, the custom of the age, and here he was being shown a cessation of war, let the good times roll. The future was certainly bright.

Where does this leave so called "christians" who engage in war, fighting, bitterness and reproach. Are they the people that this verse refers to? *Jas 4:1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Jas 4:2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Jas 4:3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that*

ye may consume it upon your lusts. Jas 4:4 ***Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?*** *whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God*.

I don't think these people are Christian, these people who would fight and war. They are earthly, carnal, religious men, wolves in sheep's clothing. They are "adulterers and adulteresses", "friends of the world" and in consequence enemies of God. Jesus, **in the Old Testament**, said, *Mat 5:38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: Mat 5:39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. Mat 5:40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. Mat 5:41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Mat 5:42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.* These are citizens fitted for heaven.

We have so many times berated our fellows in the so called faith, for omitting to follow the Lord, but if ever there was a cause to follow Him, it was to gain a passport to the Holy Mountain, "*And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to* ***the mountain of the LORD****, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem".* They will go because the Lord will teach them His ways, and if you do not care about His ways, there is no point in coming. Heaven is not where you are going home to, it doesn't want your sort! These carnal people are completely lacking God's Spirit.

We have, and I think rightly so, examined all the items of the Tabernacle and Temple and found them to be types of Christ. Each object prefigured the Glory of the Messiah. But the Temple or House of the Lord is also made up of the believers. How is this possible since only Christ is the Temple? *Rev 21:22 And I saw no temple therein:* ***for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it****. Rev 21:23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.*

The believers are called the Temple also, *2Co 6:16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for* ***ye are the temple of the living God****; as God hath said,* ***I will dwell in them****, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people*. They are put together seamlessly and silently (without the sound of the hammer) to form a "holy habitation", *Eph 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; Eph 2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: Eph 2:22* ***In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Sp*****irit**.

We have a mystical union with Christ that makes this possible

The Vision

Isa 2:1 The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Isa 2:2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that ***the mountain of the LORD'S house*** *shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. Isa 2:3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to* ***the mountain of the LORD****, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. Isa 2:4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and* ***they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation****,* ***neither shall they learn war any more****. Isa 2:5 O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.*

126. Idolatry

The subject that Isaiah now launches into after taking us to the heights of the Lord's Mountain, is the depths of sin and idolatry which separates God from Judah. The word for idol, used here is **אֱלִיל** = vanity or good for nothing, *Isa 2:6 Our LORD, you have deserted your people, Israel, because they follow customs of nations from the east. They worship Philistine gods and are close friends of foreigners. Isa 2:7 They have endless treasures of silver and gold; they have countless horses and war chariots. Isa 2:8* ***Everywhere in the country they worship the idols they have made****. Isa 2:9 And so, all of them will be ashamed and disgraced. Don't help them!* CEV.

You most probably think that idols are just lumps of wood or clay, but you would be wrong, *1Sa 15:23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry* תְּרָפִים*. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.* We are all guilty of some forms of idolatry even if we do not recognise it.

One of the best accounts of what idolatry is in, *Isa 44:9 Those people who make idols are nothing themselves, and the idols they treasure are just as worthless. Worshipers of idols are blind, stupid, and foolish. Isa 44:10 Why make an idol or an image that can't do a thing? Isa 44:11 Everyone who makes idols and all who worship them are mere humans, who will end up sadly disappointed. Let them face me in court and be terrified. Isa 44:12 A metalworker shapes an idol by using a hammer and heat from the fire. In his powerful hand he holds a hammer, as he pounds the metal into the proper shape. But he gets hungry and thirsty and loses his strength. Isa 44:13 Some woodcarver measures a piece of wood, then draws an outline. The idol is carefully carved with each detail exact. At last it looks like a person and is placed in a temple. Isa 44:14 Either cedar, cypress,*

oak, or any tree from the forest may be chosen. Or even a pine tree planted by the woodcarver and watered by the rain. Isa 44:15 ***Some of the wood is used to make a fire for heating or for cooking. One piece is made into an idol****, then the woodcarver bows down and worships it. Isa 44:16 He enjoys the warm fire and the meat that was roasted over the burning coals. Isa 44:17 Afterwards, he bows down to worship the wooden idol. "Protect me!" he says. "You are my god." Isa 44:18* ***Those who worship idols are stupid and blind!*** *Isa 44:19 They don't have enough sense to say to themselves, "I made a fire with half of the wood and cooked my bread and meat on it. Then I made something worthless with the other half. Why worship a block of wood?" Isa 44:20 How can anyone be stupid enough to trust something that can be burned to ashes? No one can save themselves like that. Don't they realize that the idols they hold in their hands are not really gods?*

You could see the dopey cartoon character Homer Simpson doing this, carving an idol and using the off cuts to cook his meat, not seeing the stupidity of what he is doing and we have a good laugh at the idiocy of it, but we all do it, as I shall show. God's comment on us is one to which we should take heed, "***Those who worship idols are stupid and blind!*** *"*

All of this vanity, emptiness and stupidity comes from us trying to find an alternative to Jehovah. The preacher in Jerusalem observed life and its meaning from a worldly perspective and came to this conclusion, *Ecc 1:1 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Ecc 1:2 Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. Ecc 1:3 What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?* Just finding a meaning to life without God is the desperate quest of a fool.

The origin of idolatry lies in the human heart, *Eze 14:3 Son of man,* ***these men have set up their idols in their heart****, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them? Eze 14:4 Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Every man of the house of Israel* ***that setteth up his idols in his heart****, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols; Eze 14:5 That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols*.

That phrase "***idols in their heart***" needs to be looked at further. The organ that pumps the blood, the heart that pushes the life around our body, is used as a metaphor for what drives the spiritual influences around our bodies, *Jas 4:1 Why do you fight and argue with each other? Isn't it because you are full of selfish desires that fight to control your body?* CEV. The heart is the well spring of life, *Pro 4:23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life*. When the heart finally gives up and stops beating, as Solomon said, we will sum up all that we did which was not for the Lord as "vanity", a vast empty desert of life, the ashes of our existence, although we did so much, so many things, but they

were valueless in the grand scheme of things. All the things that we tell ourselves are for the Lord, but in reality are excuses to indulge our pleasures, these are idols of the heart.

Through our heart we try and construct a meaningful universe, a world view of what life means, but we do not realise that our hearts are in need of corrective surgery before we can even attempt this task, *Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?* That is why the Lord must give us a new heart if we are ever to achieve sound thinking, *Eze 36:26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. Eze 36:27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*

As soon as Moses back was turned, his weak brother Aaron, caved in to the demands of the people, and made them idols, *Exo 32:21 Moses asked Aaron, "What did these people do to harm you? Why did you make them sin in this terrible way?" Exo 32:22 Aaron answered: Don't be angry with me. You know as well as I do that they are determined to do evil. Exo 32:23 They even told me, "That man Moses led us out of Egypt, but now we don't know what has happened to him. Make us a god to lead us." Exo 32:24 Then I asked them to bring me their gold earrings. They took them off and gave them to me. I threw the gold into a fire,* ***and out came this bull****. Exo 32:25 Moses knew that the people were out of control and that it was Aaron's fault. And now they had made fools of themselves in front of their enemies.* CEV. Just like that "***out came this bull***", from no design, this appeared in the form of a bull.

We aren't told much about the back story. The people must have thought a lot of Moses because when he was around they took notice of what he said. His brother, Aaron, the High Priest, did not have the same charisma and was easily led. It bode badly for the priesthood. His lame excuse was that this situation was beyond his control, and this idol just happened, and it was a blatant lie and a denial of the real circumstances by which it came about. But he was the author of it. Dr Gill's comments are well said,

> .....he speaks of it as if the gold became in the form of a calf without any design, or without using any methods to put it in this form; but that it was a matter of chance, or rather something preternatural and miraculous; he speaks of it as if it was alive, and came out of itself: and indeed the Jews represent it as done by magic art, and by the operation of Satan, and speak of it as coming out alive, bellowing and dancing; and the Targum of Jonathan is,"and I cast it into the fire, and Satan entered into the midst of it, and out of it came the likeness of this calf.''Aaron says not a word of his fashioning it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf; but Moses learned this elsewhere, and has recorded it. What Moses thought of this apology is not said; it

> could not be satisfactory to him: and it is certain the conduct of Aaron in this affair was displeasing to God; and it seemed as if he would have destroyed him, had not Moses prayed for him, *Deu 9:20 And the LORD was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also the same time. Deu 9:21 And I took your sin, the calf which ye had made, and burnt it with fire, and stamped it, and ground it very small, even until it was as small as dust: and I cast the dust thereof into the brook that descended out of the mount.*

Aaron is no different to those ignorant people, like Dawkins, who make unfounded and preposterous statements about the origin of life,

> "Discussing the theory of 'chemical evolution' or *abiogenesis* (the supposed naturalistic appearance of life from non-life), Dawkins says: "**Nobody knows** how it happened but, **somehow**, without violating the laws of physics and chemistry, a molecule arose that **just happened** to have the property of self-copying – a replicator." (*Climbing Mount Improbable*, p.259.) Dawkins' belief in *abiogenesis* is wishful thinking in that he wants it to be true because it is necessary for an atheistic account of origins, despite there being a large body of scientific evidence against the theory."

Dawkins is as stupid as Aaron, who expects us to believe that out of the fire, ready made, came this bull, just like that, and you are expected to believe him, because he is the high priest in some academic temple, that offers no proof but "somehow", it "just happened" and "nobody knows" how.

Where did the idol that Aaron made and all the other idols that man made come from? They come from the heart of an individual, his **imagination**, which means, "the faculty or action of forming new ideas, or images or concepts of external objects not present to the senses", *Gen 6:5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that* ***every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually****. Gen 6:6 And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. Gen 6:7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.* All men have in the imaginations of their hearts a depth of wickedness which deceives them utterly, *Jer 10:3 Their religion is worthless! They chop down a tree, carve the wood into an idol, Jer 10:4 cover it with silver and gold, and then nail it down so it won't fall over. Jer 10:5 An idol is no better than a scarecrow. It can't speak, and it has to be carried, because it can't walk. Why worship an idol that can't help or harm you?* CEV.

I think that this sin was deeply rooted in Israel, and how could they be a holy nation when the leaders did not lead? This makes us rethink exactly what was going on and how they could achieve the aims of their God? When you read the Book of Exodus it all seems so straight forward and the practices appear to have

been observed, and I am sure many people who have an idealised but unrealistic view of the people, think that this was the case. But I do not, and taking in to consideration all of Israel's history, they were all disobedient, throughout all time, except for a very small remnant.

Nehemiah confessed, after the destruction of the temple, that they had failed God, *Neh 9:33 Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but* ***we have done wickedly****: Neh 9:34* ***Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them****. Neh 9:35 For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works*.

Not only was the High Priest Aaron a weak man, but the nation was too and also feared going into the land of promise, *Num 32:10 And the LORD'S anger was kindled the same time, and he sware, saying, Num 32:11 Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob; because they have not wholly followed me: Num 32:12 Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Joshua the son of Nun: for they have wholly followed the LORD*.

In under two years from leaving Egypt, they were bemoaning the choice that they had made, *Num 11:1 And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. Num 11:2 And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the LORD, the fire was quenched. Num 11:3* ***And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the LORD burnt among them.*** *Num 11:4 And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?*

They were governed by their bellies, and led by their idols that they had made, and they worshipped devils, *Deu 32:17 They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not*.

127. Idolatry

I have noticed, during my long years observing Christians that Christian's don't change much during their lives. Of course, they will grow in knowledge but applying that knowledge to themselves is another thing, although they will often apply it to others, while ignoring the application to themselves. I suppose the reason that they do not change very much is because they think that they are right in what they do. In fact, what they have done is to "sanctify" their own

beliefs to make their prejudices, their views, their ways of doing things a part of their Christian life. They settle in to what makes them comfortable and never move from it.

When we become Christians, or maybe its more correct to say, when we have absorbed Jesus into the bubble of our lives, we try and process things from a Christian viewpoint and we get tied up with a pseudo-law, thinking something is wrong when perhaps there is nothing lawful or unlawful about it. Take, for instance the subject of “the demon drink”, drinking alcohol is wrong or sinful to some Christians, but is it? It depends on what you are drinking, how much you drink, why you are drinking and the effect it has on your relationships particularly with God, in fact there were certain occasions that He encouraged it, *Deu 14:26 And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep,* ***or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth****: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household*,

There were other occasions where it was inappropriate to have strong drink, *Lev 10:8 And the LORD spake unto Aaron, saying, Lev 10:9 Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations:.....Num 6:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the LORD: Num 6:3 He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried.*

There is a spectrum on which the subject of drinking alcohol lies, ranging from, *Pro 20:1 Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise*.....to.....*Psa 104:14 He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; Psa 104:15 And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart*.

There is a lot more that could be said on this subject but I make the point about being careful not to make snap judgements with an incomplete knowledge of the situation. This comes about, probably, due to the thought that it is better to have a “good law”, even if it is invented than no law at all. But it is not God’s law no matter how much you wrap it up in religious tinsel, if it does not spring from Gods word, all of God’s word, it just springs from the same place that idolatry comes from, the heart. The people who make some sort of profession of faith, very quickly become authorities about right or wrong, where you should worship, whether you should be baptised, what a ministry consists of, etc, and very quickly settle down to a life that is comfortable where it sits, without ever questioning the assumptions they have made to get there. That is dishonest behaviour.

Those people are following their own hearts, not the Lord's heart, and they have made a religion that suits them. This is idolatry, the invention of a god and worship, of a "designer" god, unique to each individual, just like the man who carves his own god, *Isa 44:15 Some of the wood is used to make a fire for heating or for cooking. One piece is made into an idol, then the woodcarver bows down and worships it. Isa 44:16 He enjoys the warm fire and the meat that was roasted over the burning coals. Isa 44:17 Afterwards, he bows down to worship the wooden idol. "Protect me!" he says. "You are my god." Isa 44:18 Those who worship idols are stupid and blind*!

Israel had the pattern of worship given by the Lord, but it needed interpreting by the Spirit of God, *Exo 31:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Exo 31:2 See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: Exo 31:3* ***And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship****, Exo 31:4 To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, Exo 31:5 And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship*. It was not a man putting his own spin on what God had given, it was the Spirit of God in a man that created the things of God, exactly as He wanted them. It was God directing the process not man.

As we observed last time, Israel was gripped with idolatry and it was ingrained in that nation, and even king Solomon did not escape it. That once great king set up the Temple of the Lord, but the idols of his heart became a reality, *1Ki 11:6 And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father. 1Ki 11:7 Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. 1Ki 11:8 And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods*. Solomon set up his idols on the Mount of Olives.

The idea that Israel, as a whole, followed the law is not true, and from inception to exile it was doomed to fail because of idolatry and it broke the law of God. It might be said, "As goes the leaders so goes the nation", because good leaders and kings had some restraining effects upon the nation, but only those people "God raised up" delivered the people, *Jdg 2:16 Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. Jdg 2:17 And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so. Jdg 2:18 And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. Jdg 2:19 And it came to pass,* ***when the judge was dead, that they returned****, and*

corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.

Israel turned from God to fables, *Tit 1:13 This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; Tit 1:14 Not giving heed to* ***Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth***. It was manufacturing idols, *Isa 57:5 All you think about is sex under those green trees where idols are worshiped. You sacrifice your children on altars built in valleys under rocky slopes. Isa 57:6 You have chosen to worship idols made of stone; you have given them offerings of wine and grain. Should I be pleased? Isa 57:7* ***You have spread out your beds on the tops of high mountains, where you sacrifice to idols.*** *Isa 57:8 Even in your homes you have placed pagan symbols all around your huge beds. Yes, you have rejected me, sold yourselves to your lovers, and gone to bed with them. Isa 57:9 You smear on olive oil and all kinds of perfume to worship the god Molech. You even seek advice from spirits of the dead. Isa 57:10 Though you tired yourself out by running after idols, you refused to stop. Your desires were so strong that they kept you going.* CEV.

It was not just one idol, it was a multitude of idols, *Eze 14:4 Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the* ***multitude of his idols****; Eze 14:5 That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols*.

This is not one man's idol, it is many men's idols, it is every man believing what he wants and yet they all aggregate together and form an alliance against truth and against God. The many conceptions of the heart, the many idols become one against Jehovah. It is polytheism, but it is also monotheism. "There is no absolute truth associated with polytheistic religions, and believers are able to worship the god of their choice, often in the way that they choose. Since people in polytheistic faiths often have the freedom to behave however they want, there is generally a lack of purpose that follows these religions. This leaves them with no sense of eternal hope and no ultimate purpose on Earth. This is where the gospel and hope found in Jesus Christ comes in". *Jdg 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes*.

Although the Lord issues a general warning to all Israel, it will only be heeded by the remnant, and as I have said at the beginning of this ministry, many people who have made a profession of faith, have made a worthless profession, because they fail to examine their position in the light of Scripture, and blindly stumble on into man's darkness. If you think I am wrong, then ask people where the practices of their congregation come from, and you will see that the majority don't have a clue and are blindly following man's way.

Idolatry was not confined to the Old Testament but is also present in the New Testamen, *Gal 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Gal 5:20* ***Idolatry****, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Gal 5:21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*.

We often miss that one, the idols that we set up in our heart, such as our children who can do nothing wrong, our friends who are not really our friends, our possessions, the bits of junk that we accumulate, the fake news we accept because it suits our world view, considering ourselves as the upright of the upright, idol upon idol is set up, deceit upon deceit, and yet we convince ourselves that we are not idolaters. We tolerate in those people close to us what we do not tolerate in the world, we are partial and we cannot evangelise while we are partial.

Take this idol that men believe and hold, it is that "The early Christian church is considered a model for Christianity because it demonstrates the faith, practices, and values that Christians continue to uphold today". Is that so? The early church becomes the norm for churches and we all look back to the start of the New Testament for our pattern, we idolise the early church but is that right? This statement from "Cold case Christianity" looks at church development,

> The first Christians were revolutionaries. The group they formed was, in many ways, very different from what we know as the Church today. According to the Book of Acts, they met in their homes and devoted themselves to God's Word. As a result, these early Christians brought about the most amazing and powerful transformation the world has ever known. Think about it for a minute. Christians emerged in the midst a tremendously diverse Roman melting pot of social and religious ideas, and through purely peaceful means completely changed the Empire and united it under the banner of Christianity. And they did it without a single mega-church, television program or website. They simply opened their homes, spoke the truth fearlessly and trusted God for the results. Long before Christianity became a dominant *political power*, it was a divine movement of God. Long before Christianity found a comfortable home in church buildings, it was an active body of passionate believers.

The initial enthusiasm and good practice soon fell into worldliness, dissention and division. Peter is an example of how quickly it was possible to go from meeting the gentiles in fellowship (Cornelius), to separating from them (at Antioch), he behaves like Aaron the High Priest. "We regard those far off Christian churches as ideal institutions, with all members working together in love, peace, and harmony. This makes a beautiful picture, but it is far from being

accurate. In point of fact, the New Testament indicates that there were many dissentions and disturbances within the early Christian groups". There was an ideal, a template, as in the Old Template so in the New Testament, but the truth was, we are still dealing with sinful human nature, and the earthly, the fleshly will screw up the plans, and it will inevitably fail. And we are in a battle, *Eph 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

I suppose that J N Darby saw this failure of the churches and made the assumption that "the visible church was in ruins" and that led in part to his dispensational view of Israel. We don't have to go to this conjecture to see what is happening, we just see by the nature of sinful man, the assembly, the church in all ages will be plagued with the evil one fighting against it and casting dirt against it, *Isa 57:20 But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest,* ***whose waters cast up mire and dirt****. Isa 57:21 There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked*.

The New Testament is **not** the period of the perfect church or when the perfect church existed, but it is the period when **the church got the pattern**, and it is the closest that we get to knowing the mind of God, because the Lord entrusted the Apostles with building it, *Eph 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; Eph 2:20* ***And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;*** *Eph 2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord*:

Why you ask, are you bringing all this up, I thought that we were looking at the prophecy of Isaiah and idolatry in particular, we were studying this Old Testament passage not the New Testament? Well if you can't see the relevance to you, there are two things that I would say to you,

1. You are not at all concerned with the application for you today, *1Co 10:11 ow all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and* ***they are written for our admonition****, upon whom the ends of the world are come. 1Co 10:12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*.
2. You are not studying scripture, you are just looking for entertainment.

We will pursue this thought that the early church was far from perfect.

128. Don't Get Complacent

We have found the Old Testament Israel to be mired in sins and but for the grace of God, a remnant only is saved. The New Testament too is not a book where all who go to a church will be saved, *Rev 3:3 Remember the teaching that you were given and that you heard. Hold firmly to it and turn from your sins. If you don't wake up, I will come when you least expect it, just as a thief does. Rev 3:4* ***A few of you in Sardis have not dirtied your clothes with sin****. You will walk with me in white clothes, because you are worthy*. CEV. The remnant are still alive, *Mat 7:21 Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven****.*** *Mat 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? Mat 7:23* ***And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity****.* Only a few in Sardis!

We must go back in our lives and see if we received Christ on the same terms as the early church believers did, or whether some smart huckster of an evangelist misinformed us about Christ. No one appears saved without perseverance, and a person who is not engaged with Christ has little hope of salvation, *Mat 10:22 Everyone will hate you because of me. But if you remain faithful until the end, you will be saved.* CEV. This is a very serious business.

The New Tesrament may be clear about salvation and it is also clear about sanctification, but as I said last time, the New Testament is **not** the period of the perfect church, when the perfect church existed, but it is the period when **the church got the pattern** of how it expects its members to behave, and throughout the letters to the various churches, sin is continually condemned and examples of how we should and should not behave are listed We see that the frequency of the exhortations implies that we have much to do, and it is surprising that so many churches have arrived at the measure and stature of Christ and that they no longer need exhorting on these issues.

Book	Date (A.D.)	Book	Date (A.D.)
James	45–49	Philippians, Philemon	63
Galatians	49	1 Peter	63–64
1 & 2 Thessalonians	51	1 Timothy	63–66
Mark	50s or 60s	Titus	63–66
Matthew	50s or 60s	Hebrews	64–68
1 Corinthians	55	2 Peter	66
2 Corinthians	56	2 Timothy	67
Romans	57–58	Jude	68–80
Luke	60	John	85–90
Acts	61	1, 2, 3 John	85–90
Colossians, Ephesians	61	Revelation	90–95

Somebody has described the 17 sins of Galatians as “Sinnerama” and that sums up the humorous dismissal of these sins as not being so serious, but they are because if you do these you will not get to heaven, *Gal 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery 25%, fornication 79%, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Gal 5:20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Gal 5:21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past,* ***that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God****.*

It is difficult to find statistics about these sins and how much they have infected the community, but we know that sexual sins, adultery, fornication, pornography are very prevalent among Christians and there is no reason to believe that other sins are not also highly represented. But when you see that the sins are still sins even when they are committed in the mind, Mat 5:27 You know the commandment which says, "Be faithful in marriage." *Mat 5:28 But I tell you that if you look at another woman and want her, you are already unfaithful in your thoughts. Mat 5:29 If your right eye causes you to sin, poke it out and throw it away. It is better to lose one part of your body, than for your whole body to end up in hell. Mat 5:30 If your right hand causes you to sin, chop it off and throw it away! It is better to lose one part of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell*. CEV.

Why on earth do we not get more preaching against these sins? The churches are in denial about the problem or down play it. Alas it wouldn't help the evangelist or evangelism to be honest, to preach the truth that we really have to repent and get rid of sin and Christians are all sinners, and in a lot of cases they are rank hypocrites. Look at how many churches change their behaviour when they go in a church building, their look, and become sombre and reflective, becomes pious, how they think religious people should, look and behave. When they have finished they change their faces and go back into the world, one face for worship and another face for the world, two faced people. You see this hypocrisy at state occasions when they invoke God, and the royals are there, and king Charles who does not know what he believes, and the prime minister, and all the Lord's and Ladies, who by there appearance seem most pious, but their lifestyles show otherwise. Even the archaic language of thee's and thou's does not hide the terrible hypocrisy of sinful hearts.

In the first letter written, the Epistle of James, the letter to the Galatians was the second, James has a lot to say about behaviour

Jas 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

Jas 1:22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. Jas 1:23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: Jas 1:24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. Jas 1:25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. Jas 1:26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Jas 1:27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Jas 2:24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Jas 2:25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? Jas 2:26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Jas 3:4 Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Jas 3:5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! Jas 3:6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

Jas 4:5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? Jas 4:6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Jas 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Jas 4:8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

Jas 5:1 Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Jas 5:2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth eaten.....Jas 5:7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Jas 5:8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

Jud 1:3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. Jud 1:4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. Jud 1:5 I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.

Tit 1:5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:

Tit 2:1 But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:

Tit 3:1 Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, Tit 3:2 To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. Tit 3:3 For we

ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

Gal 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Gal 5:20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Gal 5:21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Eph 5:3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Eph 5:4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. Eph 5:5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Gal 5:19 People's desires make them give in to immoral ways, filthy thoughts, and shameful deeds. Gal 5:20 They worship idols, practice witchcraft, hate others, and are hard to get along with. People become jealous, angry, and selfish. They not only argue and cause trouble, but they are Gal 5:21 envious. They get drunk, carry on at wild parties, and do other evil things as well. I told you before, and I am telling you again: No one who does these things will share in the blessings of God's kingdom. Gal 5:22 God's Spirit makes us loving, happy, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, Gal 5:23 gentle, and self-controlled. There is no law against behaving in any of these ways. CEV

Eph 5:3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Eph 5:4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. Eph 5:5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Eph 5:6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

129. The Key Sins of Israel and Judah

The “Prophets” unanimously condemn Israel and Judah for their sin, but the prophets all play the same record, so that you would think, “why say it over and over again?” The prophets had a message which went to different generations, so they might have been thought to be appropriate for one generation only but instead they are reinforced for each generation, as each generation continues in the sins of the father’s.

We must see that transmission of a prophecy was not as quick as a message could be disseminated today. The speed at which a prophet's message reached the people of Israel depended on the means available, such as word-of-mouth, messengers, and written records. Jonah was one of the fastest prophets, *Jon 3:4 And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. Jon 3:5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. The People of Nineveh Repent Jon 3:6* ***For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes****. Jon 3:7 And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: Jon 3:8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Jon 3:9 Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?* Jonah had the help of the king and his messengers to spread the message urgently.

Ezekiel, a prophet among the Jewish exiles in Babylon, began prophesying five years into his time at Tel-abib and continued for at least twenty-two years. Haggai's prophecies were explicitly dated, with the first message given in 520 BC, and subsequent messages following. Prophets like Isaiah (c. 740-c. 680 BC) delivered their messages during a long time of complex political and religious issues, as the end of the monarchy drew near. All of the messages have similar themes which are,

Social injustice

Oppression: The community leaders oppress the people through corruption, theft, murder, and deceit.

Exploitation: The leaders exploit the poor by taking bribes and depriving them of their rights.

Injustice: The leaders indulge in excessive partying, drinking, and acquiring goods.

Idolatry

Worshiping idols: The people bow down to the work of their hands, to what their own fingers have made.

Put simply, sin had eaten in to the fabric of society and the rot had set in, *Jer 7:9 Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not;……._Isa 33:15 He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil;……..Isa 32:6 For the vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the LORD, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail*.

Idolatry was rampant, *Isa 2:8 Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made: Isa 2:9 And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not…….Jer 50:38 A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols……..Ezk 23:39 For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house*.

False prophets were also the bane of the nation, *Isa 9:15 The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail…… Jer 6:13 For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely……. Eze 14:9 And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the LORD have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. Eze 14:10 And they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity: the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh unto him;*

History lesson over and we can close the book because that is Old Testament and we are not in the Old Tesrament, or am I being a bit too previous? Well you would be wrong to skim over the history of Israel, because it is extremely relevant to us. These sins do not just get committed in old Israel, they get committed in the church on earth. Somehow we think that the church is full of true Christians, and that the new Covenant has weeded out all of the sins and sinners of the older Covenant, and when we speak of the church, it is a righteous body of people. Wrong, it is not, *1Co 10:5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. 1Co 10:6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. 1Co 10:7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. 1Co 10:8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. 1Co 10:9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. 1Co 10:10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. 1Co 10:11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. 1Co 10:12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.* The same sins and the same type of persons are in the church today, make no mistake, and there are more of them because we do not preach against these sins.

The difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament, is that in the New Testament, the Messiah and the Holy Spirit have come, but as concerning sin it is still working just as effectively today, it still functions just as it did in Israel. The Israelites are the same as the “Christians”, a group which is a mixed

multitude, with some of the people, a remnant, it leads to eternal life, while the majority of so called “Christians” just follow an earthly form of the religion. Old Israel committed the same sins that prohibit those people of the New Testament from entering the kingdom of heaven, the same sins listed in 1 Corinthians Chapter 6, *1Co 6:9 Don't you know that evil people won't have a share in the blessings of God's kingdom? Don't fool yourselves! No one who is immoral or worships idols or is unfaithful in marriage or is a pervert or behaves like a homosexual 1Co 6:10 will share in God's kingdom. Neither will any thief or greedy person or drunkard or anyone who curses and cheats others. 1Co 6:11* ***Some of you used to be like that****. But now the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the power of God's Spirit have washed you and made you holy and acceptable to God.* CEV. “**Some of you**”, New Testament followers of the Messiah, were like that, and the rest were still polluted with sin.

I think that some modern evangelist’s have oversold “Jesus” and by this people are admitted into the church, the assembly, who have not understood the message. They come “up to the front and give themselves to Jesus” and there and then, they are supposedly saved, according to the words of the evangelist. This is in marked contrast with what the Apostle Peter says, *1Pe 1:9 Your faith has a goal, and you are reaching that goal—your salvation*. ERV. Salvation is not the result of an act at the beginning, it is the culmination, the end, of following Jesus. There is a lot of water to flow under the bridge before you reach that “goal” of salvation.

The initial commitment you make is found to be genuine, when you continue to be found doing what Jesus, the Master, has said, *Mat 24:45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Mat 24:46* ***Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing****. Mat 24:47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. Mat 24:48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; Mat 24:49 And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; Mat 24:50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, Mat 24:51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*.

We have both a despicably low view of the saving work of Christ and an equally low view of God’s standards that is if we do accept God’s standards, and we look at those disobedient Jews, and shake our heads at them, not seeing that we are in the same condition, of “terminal hypocrisy”. Because of our rotten “theology” we deceive ourselves that we are honouring the Lord, and we go along in that deception. We listen to the false teachers and prophets far too regularly, without fact checking them, *2Pe 2:1 Sometimes false prophets spoke to the people of Israel. False teachers will also sneak in and speak harmful lies to you. But these teachers don't really belong to the Master who paid a great price for them, and they will quickly destroy themselves. 2Pe 2:2 Many people will follow their evil*

ways and cause others to tell lies about the true way. 2Pe 2:3 They will be greedy and cheat you with smooth talk. But long ago God decided to punish them, and God doesn't sleep. CEV.

Peter saw the falsehood coming upon the church as it had upon Israel of old and that the church was not excused this trial. The people who do this are "dry wells", 2Pe 2:17 *These people are like dried up water holes and clouds blown by a windstorm. The darkest part of hell is waiting for them. 2Pe 2:18 They brag out loud about their stupid nonsense. And by being vulgar and crude, they trap people who have barely escaped from living the wrong kind of life. 2Pe 2:19 They promise freedom to everyone. But they are merely slaves of filthy living, because people are slaves of whatever controls them. 2Pe 2:20 When they learned about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they escaped from the filthy things of this world. But they are again caught up and controlled by these filthy things, and now they are in worse shape than they were at first.* CEV.

That which affects our salvation, are the basic false teachings that are thrown out by the devil himself. That you can even think of saving yourself or contributing to your salvation immediately puts you in danger. The idea that salvation can be earned through good deeds, rituals, or following a specific set of rules, rather than being a free gift received through faith in Jesus Christ is wrong, *Eph 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Eph 2:9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.* Good works do not save you and there is nothing big enough you can work, and God has made that clear.

There is also the truth that although good works cannot save you, they are a necessary component of faith, *Jas 2:17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Jas 2:18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Jas 2:19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. Jas 2:20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead*? James isn't talking about **salvation** he is talking about **faith**! Salvation is the work of Christ alone, and if you follow false teaching, and do not rely on Christ alone, you are saying that Jesus is not good enough to do this and you are just like the stupid man who bows down in front of an idol he has made.

Another falsehood is that you can fall from salvation, "Once Saved, Always Saved (Hyper-Grace)", the belief that once a person professes faith, they cannot lose their salvation, regardless of their actions or beliefs. I have over the years heard arguments for and against this, but I have come to the conclusion that it is a senseless question. It is trying to determine a person's status in the faith, **NOW**, at this time, by making a gross assumption about the final state of the person. You see, according to Peter, *1Pe 1:8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: 1Pe 1:9* ***Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of***

your souls. You are saved at the end, not now, in a single action, but after a long pilgrimage of many trials. Only at that stage in the journey can you make any statement about a person's salvation.

You may now have a certain "hope", *1Th 5:8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet,* ***the hope of salvation****.....Rom 8:24 And this hope is what saves us. But if we already have what we hope for, there is no need to keep on hoping. Rom 8:25 However, we hope for something we have not yet seen, and* ***we patiently wait for it***. That "hope" is based upon your walk, *Heb 6:9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. Heb 6:10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. Heb 6:11* ***And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:*** *Heb 6:12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises*.

In that state, there is "hope", and that hope is based upon "Christ in you", *Col 1:27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles;* ***which is Christ in you, the hope of glory****: Col 1:28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Col 1:29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily*. Once you give up hope, you are in a hopeless situation.

The verses which seem to speak about "falling from salvation" are, *Gal 5:3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Gal 5:4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law;* ***ye are fallen from grace****.....Heb 6:4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, Heb 6:5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, Heb 6:6* ***If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance****; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame*.

The first which says "ye are fallen from grace", or I would say, "fallen from favour", God's favour, it does not say anything about salvation. The second, which says, "if they shall fall away" is not talking about salvation either. It is talking about turning away from Christ, having begun in Him, not about being saved forever.

There are other falsehoods that the peddlers of false doctrine teach, The **Prosperity Gospel**, **Universalism**, which believes everyone will be saved, **New Revelation** claiming that God is still revealing new, scripture-level truths today can lead to confusion and diminish the final authority of the Bible, **Work-Based Salvation** which teaches that our actions can earn us a place in heaven,

a **Denial of Hell** and punishment, **Name It and Claim It** which treats God like a genie who grants wishes if we just believe hard enough, **Denial of Christ's Humanity** by downplaying Jesus' humanity ignores the incredible truth that He fully experienced human life, with all its limitations and sufferings, **Denial of Christ's Return**, **Relativism** which embraces the idea that truth is subjective and personal, and dismisses the Bible's claim to be the ultimate standard of truth. And many, many more falsehoods which mislead the Israel of God.

If we do not carefully listen to the Lord, we shall perish as surely as they did under the older Covenant.

130. Who is Ruling the World?

In the introduction to Isaiah, he says, *Isa 1:2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. Isa 1:3 The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Isa 1:4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward*. The Lord calls the heavens and the earth to bear witness to the fact that the people have rebelled and forsaken God.

Jeremiah sums up Judah, later, as, *Jer 2:25 Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst: but thou saidst, There is no hope: no; **for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.** Jer 2:26 As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets, Jer 2:27 Saying to a stock, Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth: for they have turned their back unto me, and not their face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us*. Or as the CEV puts it, *Jer 2:25 shoes are worn out, and your throat is parched from running here and there to worship foreign gods. **"Stop!" I shouted, but you replied, "No! I love those gods too much."***

Israel's love affair with God was over, and they were going their own way as the world would dictate to them, but escaping from His influence would be much more difficult. The Israelites had been seduced by the world and its pleasures or to use that modern term Zeitgeist. Zeitgeist is borrowed from German and literally translates to "time spirit" or "spirit of the times." It comes from the German Zeit, meaning "time," and Geist, meaning "spirit" or "ghost" (as seen in poltergeist, which means "a noisy ghost"). The spirit of the age in which they lived had overcome them bit by bit, and this showed in the habits of their kings, who acted as a focus of the nation.

When we see the lives of the kings, **Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah,** we are also looking at the lives of the people, as Ecclesiasticus says, *Sir 10:2* ***As the judge of the people is himself, so are his officers****; and what manner of man the ruler of the city is, such are all they that dwell therein.* It is rather like the saying of Ezekiel, *Eze 16:44 Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, saying,* ***As is the mother, so is her daughter***. The people who surround the ruler are like the ruler, to whit, Donald Trump's entourage are loyally like him, and Kier Starmer's entourage are like him. The king's people are like the king, just as we are like, or should be like King Jesus.

The men of this world get too big for the small space that they occupy in their limited time. They are as the grass of the field, which is cast in the oven. They fool themselves into thoughts of their own eternity, which just does not last very long. Their imagination is too big for their tiny minds, so they develop an imaginary world. Take Nebuchadnezzar, for example, who had two dreams. The first dream is of the worlds kingdoms up to the time of Christ. The king should have appreciated what was been told to him, "I must decrease and He must increase", *Dan 2:44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but* ***it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever***. I do not think that he did appreciate it, that his kingdom would not last, and he may have been the golden head but only for a short time.

But then Nebuchadnezzar then shows how obtuse he was to the dream, so that he goes out and makes, not a head of gold, but a whole statue of gold. He glories in himself, and gets the people to worship his golden idol, *2Th 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 2Th 2:4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped;* ***so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God***.

The king issues a decree to worship the image, *Dan 3:1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. Dan 3:2 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. ……..Dan 3:6 And whoso falleth* ***not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace***. Likewise those who fail to worship Christ will be cast into the fire, *Mat 13:41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and*

they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; Mat 13:42 And ***shall cast them into a furnace of fire****: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth*.

This religious coercion is still going on and will go on until that beast of mans imagination is killed, *Rev 13:13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, Rev 13:14* ***And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth*** *by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth,* ***that they should make an image to the beast****, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. Rev 13:15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak,* ***and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.*** *Rev 13:16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads*: *Rev 13:17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Rev 13:18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast:* ***for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six****.*

We have a battle to overcome this beast, who has the same numerals as Nebuchadnezzar's image, the Babylonian number 6. Those who overcome this beast will be saved, just as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were saved from the fiery furnace, *Rev 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God,* ***and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands****; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*

The people who do not want God, do not want His laws, so they have the mark of the beast upon their head and hands, where the Law of God should be written, but the people who love God have the Divine law written on them, *Deu 6:6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: Deu 6:7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.* ***Deu 6:8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes****. Deu 6:9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.*

Round one to the Lord, for Nebuchadnezzar had to acknowledge the Lord was the great deliverer, *Dan 3:29 Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort*.

The second dream troubles Nebuchadnezzar, *Dan 4:10 Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. Dan 4:11 The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: Dan 4:12 The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. Dan 4:13 I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven; Dan 4:14 He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches: Dan 4:15 Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth: Dan 4:16 Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him*.

The tree was Nebuchadnezzar, *Dan 4:22 It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth. Dan 4:23 And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him; Dan 4:24 This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king: Dan 4:25 That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. Dan 4:26 And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule*.

This was the lesson to the arrogant tyrant, *Dan 4:32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee,* ***until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will****.....Dan 4:35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?*

The whole world lies in the hand of the Lord, not one moment of time hides before Him. King David knew this, *Psa 139:2 You know when I am resting or when I am working, and from heaven you discover my thoughts. Psa 139:3 You notice everything I do and everywhere I go. Psa 139:4 Before I even speak a*

word, you know what I will say, Psa 139:5 and with your powerful arm you protect me from every side. Psa 139:6 I can't understand all of this! Such wonderful knowledge is far above me.
Psa 139:7 Where could I go to escape from your Spirit or from your sight? CEV. Nothing is hid from Him, *Heb 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Heb 4:13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do*.

When we look at the events going on around the world, the bigger issues and the lesser issues, and we moan about the state of mankind, but we are forgetting the Lord, *Luk 21:25 Strange things will happen to the sun, moon, and stars. The nations on earth will be afraid of the roaring sea and tides, and they won't know what to do. Luk 21:26 People will be so frightened that they will faint because of what is happening to the world. Every power in the sky will be shaken. Luk 21:27 Then the Son of Man will be seen, coming in a cloud with great power and glory. Luk 21:28 When all of this starts happening, stand up straight and be brave. You will soon be set free*.

These things must occur, it is written, and no matter how much it upsets our view of how things must be, we as Christians should earnestly desire them, because it signals the end of this chapter of life. And above this we have the assurance of His Divine Providence, and nothing escapes His Decree, and all will be well with us. Thank the Lord that He is in command, and all the dictators, and tyrants, and liars, and thieves, and those who live for themselves, together with the whole of mankind that rejects the Lord, will all bow the knee to Him.

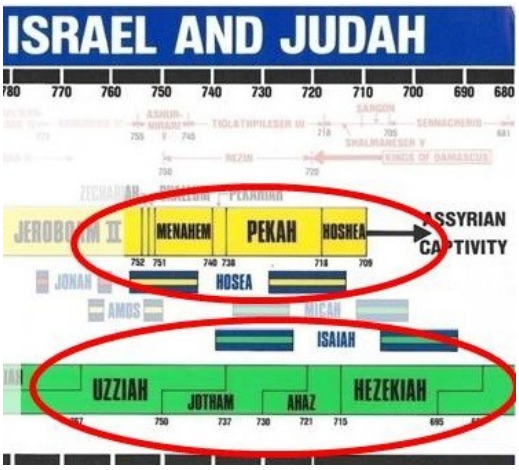
We have nothing to fear, and we should continuously remind ourselves of this fact

131. Familiarity Breeds Contempt

A theme throughout the prophets is that the Lord calls on His people to repent and amend their ways, if they do this He will repent of the evil He would do to them, *Jer 26:12 Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard. Jer 26:13 Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you*.

Isaiah tells Judah, *Isa 22:17 Behold, the LORD will carry thee away with a mighty captivity, and will surely cover thee. Isa 22:18 He will surely violently turn*

and toss thee like a ball into a large country: there shalt thou die, and there the chariots of thy glory shall be the shame of thy lord's house. Isa 22:19 And I will drive thee from thy station, and from thy state shall he pull thee down.



A contemporary prophet to Isaiah who speaks to Judah, is Hosea who speaks to Israel, with the same message, but he opens it up by looking at Israel form their birth as a nation, *Hos 11:1 When Israel was a child, I loved him, and I called my son out of Egypt. Hos 11:2 But as the saying goes, "The more they were called, the more they rebelled." They never stopped offering incense and sacrifices to the idols of Baal. Hos 11:3 I took Israel by the arm and taught them to walk. But they would not admit that I was the one who had healed them. Hos 11:4 I led them with kindness and with love, not with ropes. I held them close to me; I bent down to feed them. Hos 11:5 But they trusted Egypt instead of returning to me; now Assyria will rule them.* CEV. Hosea concludes his dialogue with this word, *Hos 12:14 Israel, I will make you pay for your terrible sins and for insulting me*. CEV.

The Lord couches His language in the manner in which most parents can understand. He has brought up ungrateful children, although they were wanted and loved, they did not trust the parent. At work I knew a senior engineer, he was a structural engineer, but his wife never gave him any credibility for his expertise. Whenever something went wrong in the house, she would enquire how to fix it from an old neighbour of theirs who had no knowledge of anything, rather than her expert husband. He couldn’t understand why she put so little faith in his ability and asked the amateur instead. A prophet without honour comes to mind, but that is exactly the way we go about following the Lord. We do not trust Him to lead us, rather we trust half-wits and idiots to guide us through the complexities of life.

The Lord is certainly longsuffering, with each generation, sparing the horrors of war and deportation, but patience has its limits, and besides, successive generations may have gotten the idea that it was all bluster and no substance. Just as some parents raise their voices and shout to try and make children obey, threats which are empty, and the child knows it and plays on it. We often confuse longsuffering with inactivity, but this is not so in the case of the Lord. The road to punishment is sure and certain.

The law of the parent was established by God, *Exo 20:12 Honour (כָּבֵד) thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee*. The command carries with it a promise, *Eph 6:2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) Eph 6:3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth*. Long life is

linked to the attitude to parents and it is as if the Lord is watching and conducting judgement for us.

It became a corporate responsibility to discipline the son, and after the parents had done all they could, *Deu 21:18 A father and a mother may have a stubborn and rebellious son who refuses to obey them even after he has been punished. Deu 21:19 If a son is like that, his parents must drag him to the town gate, where the leaders of the town hold their meetings. Deu 21:20 The parents will tell the leaders, "This son of ours is stubborn and never obeys. He spends all his time drinking and partying." Deu 21:21 The men of the town will stone that son to death, because they must get rid of the evil he brought into the community. Everyone in Israel will be afraid when they hear how he was punished*. He was given the ultimate sanction, the death penalty. You may think that this was being too hard on the son, but what message did it send to the others in that society. If you let the rot set in it will devastate the order in your society, just as is happening in our society.

The “prodigal” son is a slightly different case, *Luk 15:12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. Luk 15:13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living*. He appears to behave himself in his fathers house, but as soon as he is far enough away from home he behaves just as the young man in Deuteronomy, until he has nothing. The Lord certainly showed him where he was better off. But the supreme example of an obedient son is Jesus, who is an example for everyone, as He said, *Joh 8:29 And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for* ***I do always those things that please him***.

Proverbs speaks of the “wise son”, *Pro 13:1A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke…….. Pro 15:20A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother…….. Pro 23:1 My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine. Pro 23:16 Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things…….. Pro 27:11My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him that reproacheth me…….Pro 28:7 Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous men shameth his father*. The son is a mirror in which his parental glory is reflected and is a lens which magnifies it. Why should a son not want honour his father? The son shows the wisdom of the parent, the characteristics of a good mother and father, he gladdens their heats, and he listens to instructions.

How did this come about? Not by chance but by design, *Deu 6:6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: Deu 6:7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Deu 6:8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes……Deu*

11:18 Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. Deu 11:19 And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Deu 11:20 And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates: Deu 11:21 That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.

When we bring up a child up in a Christian home, we think primarily of getting them to commit their lives to Jesus. When we have done that we can relax, but should we. We tell them Bible stories as a way of educating them and generally these are simple tales of Noah's Ark, the Exodus, the Life of Jesus, the Crucifixion and so on. We tell the stories at bedtime or at a Bible class in Sunday school, and our children end up as Biblical illiterates just as we, the parents are. This is a far cry from God's way, "*And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates:*" This was far more rigorous than our slack way.

Firstly you had to know the way of God intimately to be able to teach it and speak of it. From morning to bedtime, "*when thou liest down, and when thou risest up*", when you did anything, "*when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way*", it was a suitable moment for education in the ways of God. But we content ourselves with some sort of profession of faith, which we cling on to, in a vain hope that it has substance, when in fact we know that it is far from the service that Christ demands. The result of this shallow profession, this often forced commitment, is that we walk around on eggshells because we are afraid of upsetting what little faith there is in our children. There is a consequence to this which I shall come to.

Look at your own faith, how deep is it? Does it just start and end in church on Sunday, and with it the Bible, God's word is neglected from week to week. Are you more interested in readings some daily devotional which takes about 5 minutes to go through and then think you have done a Bible study for the day? Are you constantly thinking up questions for yourself on Biblical subjects or do you just listen to sermons, getting spoon fed like a grown up baby? Are you even fit to teach your children anything about the faith of Christ? From this developed complacency, we teach our children the little they know, and it is no wonder that the God they see is a shrivelled up version of the truth.

If we can't teach our children it is no wonder they are like they are, clinging to an empty profession. And we know this also by our attitude to them, were we treat them just as we would the Christians. We eat and drink with them, go down to their level, do not rebuke their bad behaviour, their wrong life style choices, their

marital unfaithfulness, all of this we preside over with a smile, not once thinking, “what should I do in these circumstances?”

The Bible is quite clear, “withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly”, or as the CEV puts it, *2Th 3:6 My dear friends, in the name of the Lord Jesus, I beg you not to have anything to do with any of your people who loaf around and refuse to obey the instructions we gave you. 2Th 3:7 You surely know that you should follow our example. We didn't waste our time loafing, 2Th 3:8 and we didn't accept food from anyone without paying for it. We didn't want to be a burden to any of you, so night and day we worked as hard as we could*. CEV. Now if it says that about brothers, “***if every brother that walketh disorderly***” what on earth are we doing walking with unbelievers, eating and drinking with them? Why do we treat the believer who is not walking straight worse, than an unbeliever? That is just the way we have got tangled in the world and confuse our mission.

The outcome of this is that we have made a disobedient community of our children in our own lacklustre image. This multiplies the ignorance with every generation until we are totally separated from the Lord and judgement is pending. We are contemptuous of God. Yes, WE are, and Daniel lumps himself together with the nation, *Dan 9:5 But we have sinned terribly by rebelling against you and rejecting your laws and teachings. Dan 9:6 We have ignored the message your servants the prophets spoke to our kings, our leaders, our ancestors, and everyone else. Dan 9:7 Everything you do is right, our Lord. But still we suffer public disgrace because we have been unfaithful and have sinned against you. This includes all of us, both far and near—the people of Judah, Jerusalem, and Israel, as well as those you dragged away to foreign lands, Dan 9:8 and even our kings, our officials, and our ancestors.* CEV.

The non-Christian view that somehow whatever we do is alright, because we are “in the Lord’s will”, is brought to nothing by this example. We have sinned by rebelling against God, and we should feel thoroughly ashamed of ourselves for saying it is alright because it is God’s will for me! We had better examine our ways and repent quickly, as the Lord Jesus said to the churches, *Rev 2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent*. Jesus tells a majority of the churches He visits to repent, 5 out of 7. What is wrong with us? We do not examine ourselves, we think that all is well. Does your church need to repent or is it doing everything that Christ wants?

132. Uzziah’s Demise and Isaiah’s Rise

Preparatory reading: Isaiah Chapter 6

I have already suggested that Chapters 1 through 5 appear to act as an Executive Summary of the book of Isaiah. What follows these chapters is more detail, but a repetition of the subjects outlined in the summary, the wickedness of Judah, the unfaithful city, the Mountain of the Lord, the Day of the Lord, the judgement on Jerusalem and Judah, the branch of the Lord glorified, and the vineyard of the Lord destroyed.

I think that the book of Isaiah begins properly at the juncture of two events, after the executive summary,

1. The death of Uzziah
2. Isaiah's vision of the Lord

After a long and generally successful reign of 52 years, Uzziah ends his career as a leper, which in a way mirrors the decline in the people of Judah, *Isa 6:1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I had a vision of the LORD. He was on his throne high above, and his robe filled the temple. Isa 6:2 Flaming creatures with six wings each were flying over him. They covered their faces with two of their wings and their bodies with two more. They used the other two wings for flying, Isa 6:3 as they shouted, "Holy, holy, holy, LORD All-Powerful!* ***The earth is filled with your glory****." Isa 6:4 As they shouted, the doorposts of the temple shook, and the temple was filled with smoke*. CEV.

The earth, contrary to our expectations, is filled with the Glory of God. Despite what we see with our physical sight, despite the failed leaders, despite the wars and hardships of this life, the Lord remains in control, and if we will look we shall see His Glory, in all of the perverse providence, we see His Glory, *Rev 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. Rev 19:12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. Rev 19:13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God*.

The believer can appreciate this, *Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*. All things work together, in a divine mixture where the poison is neutralised by the good Christ does, and the foul is made sweet by the fragrance of Christ. This world for us must be filled with God's glory, not just trickles of glory, but deep springs of glory, then we can bathe in if we but think about it. We have a front row seat in this extravaganza of Glory and shame on us if we do not sit a while and enjoy it.

Isaiah saw in his vision, what Elisha saw all of the time, *2Ki 6:13 And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. 2Ki 6:14 Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. 2Ki 6:15 And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth,*

behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? 2Ki 6:16 And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. 2Ki 6:17 ***And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw****: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha*.

Imagine what it must be like, seeing the world in reality, seeing the power of God clearly. Some have been given this ability and although the majority have not been given it, we none the less see through their eyes and we are encouraged by what they see. Isaiah is given leave to tell us what he sees and it is magnificent. He sees the Almighty, "*I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly*".

I think that Isaiah saw the Cherubim, the vehicle which carried the Glory of the Lord throughout the Universe, *Psa 18:6 In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears. Psa 18:7 Then the earth reeled and rocked; the foundations also of the mountains trembled and quaked, because he was angry. Psa 18:8 Smoke went up from his nostrils, and devouring fire from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him. Psa 18:9 He bowed the heavens and came down; thick darkness was under his feet. Psa 18:10* ***He rode on a cherub and flew; he came swiftly on the wings of the wind***.

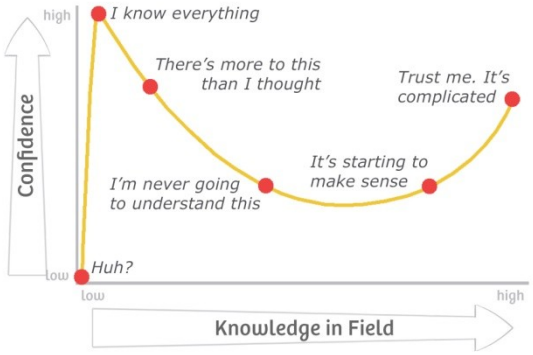
Ezekiel also speaks of these creatures, *Eze 1:13 As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. Eze 1:14 And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning. Eze 1:15 Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. Eze 1:16 The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. Eze 1:17 When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went. Eze 1:18 As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four. Eze 1:19 And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. Eze 1:20 Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels*.

I take the term "Seraphim" to be a descriptive of the way that the Cherubim look. The same word seraphim is used elsewhere of the "fiery serpents", *Num*

*21:6 And the LORD sent **fiery serpents** among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died……Deu 8:15 Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were **fiery serpents**, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint*; I don't think that it implies the snakes were burning like coal, but perhaps their bite was.

The vision of God, standing in the presence of His Majesty, and of His Holiness, has a profound effect upon Isaiah. He sees himself as he is in God's sight, *Isa 6:4 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Isa 6:5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: **for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts***. Isaiah is convicted of his sin.

Only by getting a real sense of the Lord's presence and power do we come to a conviction of sin because it makes us feel absolutely what we are, base creatures, rebels against God. **Conversion without conviction**, leads to an earthly, carnal profession of faith. Conversion without conviction is a change in belief or behaviour without a genuine understanding or acceptance of the underlying principles or message. It's a situation where someone outwardly changes their actions or beliefs without a deeply rooted, internal conviction that supports their new stance.



When I made my first faltering steps as a new believer, I had only assented to the truth of the Gospel, that I was a sinner, and I would have said that I was converted. But I lacked that deep conviction of what Christianity was about, what I had been forgiven, who Christ Jesus actually was. It is like the Dunning Kruger effect. With little knowledge you think that you know everything, but the more you learn, uncertainty settles in, until you see the complexity of it all. I would say that all I had really done in being "converted", was to break that initial barrier, and admit to being a sinner, without the slightest knowledge of what sin was. I lacked conviction, but it didn't seem important as all it seemed, that those around me wanted, was conversion and not conviction.

But conversion should be based on a genuine, internal conviction, not just external pressures, emotions, or social influence. Churches are full of people who have the external "conversion" but are lacking that "conviction" by the Spirit. True conversion involves a shift in one's heart and mind, a belief that is deeply ingrained and guides their actions. It is the work of the Holy Spirit, leading to a deeper understanding and acceptance of God's truth. Conversion without conviction can be seen as a superficial change, lacking the depth and sincerity required for genuine spiritual transformation. I think that Isaiah, the religious

man, the believer in God, had finally crossed the line of faith and entered the presence of God.

To show his sin is forgiven, the seraph, the fiery creature, takes a red hot coal from off of God's altar, and touches his lips, *Isa 6:6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: Isa 6:7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged*. It is not that our sins are purged by coal, for only Christ's blood can do that, *Heb 1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high*. It is showing us in a symbol that the Almighty has burned up his sinfulness and incidentally, he is a new creature and ready to be commissioned.

Isaiah is keen to start working for the Lord, and answers the call to service immediately it is made, *Isa 6:8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me*. I wonder whether he had given a thought about what he was about to do. It wasn't going to be salvation for his people, but judgement, and he would stand like a judge condemning them to hell.

He is charged with going to the people and speaking to them in words which they do not understand, *Isa 6:9 And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Isa 6:10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed*. It is quite deliberate, because it is so the people will **NOT** be converted and healed. It was why Jesus spoke in parables, *Mat 13:13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. Mat 13:14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive*:

A parable, like the "U" shaped curve, the parabola, has two arms to it, like the horns of a bull. One arm has one meaning the other arm a different meaning, but both make sense although one arm is the true message. The passage about the sower is an example, where seed fell by the wayside and the birds came and ate it. That is one arm of the parable. The other arm is the spiritual truth, *Mat 13:19 When any one heareth **the word of the kingdom**, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side*.

The parables tell of the world of the kingdom of heaven, *Mar 4:11 And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know **the mystery of the kingdom of God**: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: Mar 4:12 That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear,*

and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. The parables are in essence the mysteries about the kingdom. They tell of something beyond this carnal life, something deeper, more spiritual. Not about an earthly nation but about a heavenly nation, ruled by a heavenly King. Not about an earthly Temple with animal sacrifices, *Heb 9:9 Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Heb 9:10 Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and* ***carnal ordinances***, ***imposed on them until the time of reformation***.

The big question is how long would this preaching go on for, *Isa 6:11 Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, Isa 6:12 And the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. Isa 6:13 But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof*.

The preaching would last until God's judgement was fulfilled, until the land was desolate

133. The Sign of The Virgin

Preparatory reading: Isaiah Chapter 7

We remind ourselves that the vision of Isaiah occurs during the reign of four kings, *Isa 1:1 The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of* ***Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah,*** *kings of Judah.* King Ahaz has died, Jotham his son who took over when he became a leper does not seem to get a mention in the prophecy, and we are found in the reign of king Ahaz.

At this time, Syria to the north and Ephraim (Samaria), make a pact and go up against Judah and Jerusalem, *Isa 7:1 And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. Isa 7:2 And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind*. Israel and Syria are going against Judah and Judah is scared sick.

The Lord replies, *Isa 7:7 I, the LORD, promise that* ***this will never happen****. Isa 7:8 Damascus is just the capital of Syria, and King Rezin rules only in Damascus. Samaria is just the capital of Israel, and King Pekah rules only in Samaria. But* ***in***

less than sixty-five years, Israel will be destroyed*. And if Ahaz and his officials don't trust me, they will be defeated*. CEV. This is the background to the sign of the virgin giving birth, and it was a sign that all would come to pass as the Lord had said.

The verse I want to draw your attention to is found in Isaiah Chapter 7 and verse 14, *Isa 7:12 But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD. Isa 7:13 And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Isa 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you* ***a sign****;* ***Behold, a virgin*** עַלְמָה ***shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*** *Isa 7:15 Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. Isa 7:16 For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings. Isa 7:17 The LORD shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah; even the king of Assyria.*

It is a verse which also occurs in Matthew's Gospel, *Mat 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Mat 1:22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Mat 1:23* ***Behold, a virgin παρθένος shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son,*** *and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us*. It was "filled" in Isaiah's time and "fulfilled in Jesus day.

People make a distinction over the two Hebrew words for virgin, betulah and almah, but I do not see why, as they are both used to describe a woman who had not had intercourse with a man, *Gen 24:15 And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. Gen 24:16 And the damsel was very fair to look upon,* ***a virgin*** בְּתוּלָה, ***neither had any man known her****: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.....Gen 24:43 Behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass, that when* ***the virgin*** עַלְמָה *cometh forth to draw water, and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink*; Rebekah was both betulah and almah, a pure woman, and that is what Isaiah is getting at.

In the Greek Old Testament, the LXX, the word παρθένος = parthenos is used, so the ancients had no problem with the woman being a virgin. In Athens the Parthenon's name, derived from the Greek word παρθένος refers to the temple's dedication to the goddess Athena Parthenos, also known as Athena the Virgin.

All women start life as virgins, and nothing is intimated in this "sign" that the birth would involve parthenogenesis, a subsequent virgin birth, not involving the agency of a man. Somewhere in Judah, in the days of which Isaiah is speaking, some girl who has not had a baby, would give birth to a son, and they would call

him Emmanuel. This event does not imply supernatural agency in the conception, but the event itself would be a Divine sign to Judah, in that day, and would occur in that day.

The child would be called Emmanuel, God with us, and this name does not imply that the person is Divine, any more the Jesus the son of Nun (aka Joshua) is, or EliMelech, God is King, the husband of Naomi is. The name Emanuel is appropriate because the sign was to show that God was with the people, God with us, Emmanuel.

How does this prophecy apply to two events 700 years apart, one in Isaiah's day and one in Jesus' day? How is it a dual sign, relevant in Isaiah's day and relevant in Jesus' day when the circumstances seem so different or are they?

In Isaiah's day the nation of Judah was fighting Israel and Syria, but the Lord had said he would cut off these people from the land and "within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken". Ephraim is often used to symbolize the Northern **Kingdom of Israel**, particularly after the kingdom's division, so in 65 years Israel would be cut off from Judah. 65 years is a long time, so this "sign" is given to Judah, to be patient while God's purposes are worked out.

The prophecy is also taken forward in time to the birth of Christ, who is also called Emmanuel, *Mat 1:22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Mat 1:23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us*. This child was also going to preside over the demise of the Nation of Israel. This King of a new kingdom, not of earth, *Joh 18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence*.

Did Isaiah see that his prophecy would find its mark in the Messiah Jesus, did he see that the important fulfilment would be in 700 years time? I'm not sure he did because the problems of his, the merging two armies coming against Jerusalem would certainly affect him, some vague promise that would happen in the future would not affect him because he would be dead.

Did God actually have a prophecy that would be completed twice, a double fulfilment, and if He did, what is the principle upon which it was based? Its easy to begin speculating and before long, if there is not much Biblical evidence, then we fabricate it and turn it into a "fact". But what facts do we have to start generating a principle of "dual fulfilment"? Not much really, and if we do not have a word from the Lord, and there is not much evidence for it, except it is fulfilled twice, but that is one example and does not necessarily lead to a principle.

What do we know? We know that, *Rev 19:10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God:* ***for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy***. That is, all of prophecy has as its core message, the witness of Jesus. Unravel prophecy, go down layer by layer and you get to the heart of the message, Jesus. The whole of the Bible is about Jesus, and although it might have a lot to say about other people, nestling in there is Jesus, the Creator, *Heb 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God*. Jesus starts and ends our faith, and all else is irrelevant.

So I think that I am on solid ground when I state that as a principle, “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy”. I also take it as another principle that everything that Jesus makes, as our Creator, bears His image, and every object of worship, conveys to us the Divine plan, which is hidden from earthly gaze, *Heb 8:5 Who serve unto* ***the example and shadow of heavenly things****, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount*. As we have seen, the furniture of the Tabernacle all has something to show of Jesus, some aspect of His person and work.

It must not surprise us then if God will take the verse in Isaiah 7:14,and openly show it to contain Jesus, for He is the archetype of the things which are found in heaven and scattered upon earth, He is the spirit of prophecy, He is the beginning and end of all meaning. It sometimes seems to me that the way we argue is like the deliberations of two ants on an apple, trying to find a solution to the origin of the cosmos. We lack the ability, and so we are given to generate arguments without any evidence to settle our curiosity, instead of falling upon the solid rock of Jesus, who is all in all.

Another Messianic, Jesus prophecy, is given a few chapters later, *Isa 9:3 Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. Isa 9:4 For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. Isa 9:5 For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. Isa 9:6* ***For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace****. Isa 9:7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this*.

You may have thought to find this in the New Tesrament, but it is not quoted as a complete text. It occurs as a different series of quotations, of glimpses of Christ

the King. It is looking at the culmination of the work of Christ and His Kingdom, which started a few verses before, *Isa 8:20 To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. Isa 8:21 And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward. Isa 8:22 And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness. Isa 9:1 Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. Isa 9:2* ***The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined***.

The light that the people see, is Jesus, *Mat 4:13 And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: Mat 4:14 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Mat 4:15 The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; Mat 4:16* ***The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. Mat 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand****.*

It is something that has puzzled me. Jesus never visited the great cities if Galilee. Tiberius, which stood on the shores of Galilee, clearly visible from Capernaum, Sephoris just a few mile down the hill from the Nazareth ridge, Beth Shan to the east of the Jezreel valley. These were big Gentile cities in what is called “Galilee of the Gentiles” but they were all Greco/Roman cities, sitting in the Jewish divisions of the tribes, Naphtali and Zebulon.

The Righteous Reign of the Branch

Mat 2:1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Mat 2:2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

134. The Righteous Reign of the Branch

John Dickerson

Jesus as Temple - a forgotten aspect of his own claim to authority

In the midst of this already heightened sense of occasion, toward the end of his public career as a teacher and healer, Jesus entered the Jerusalem Temple and proceeded to pronounce judgement on it—as if he had authority even over this central symbol of Israel's faith:

"Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. "It is written," he said to them, "'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it 'a den of robbers'." — Matthew 21:12–13

It is hardly surprising that Jesus would be dead by the end of the week. It is also not surprising that one of the central charges laid against him at his trial was his reported contempt for the temple. Matthew's Gospel records: "Finally two came forward and declared, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'" Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to answer?'"— Matthew 26:60–62

Jesus did not answer this charge, perhaps because he did actually say something like this, even if he meant it in a symbolic way. Historically revealing is the fact that in the Gospel of John's account of the clearing of the temple (probably written independently of the other three Gospels) we hear a statement from Jesus that comes very close to the one recalled at his trial:

"The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken. "

— John 2:18–22

At first sight, this is a bizarre statement: Jesus' body, crucified and raised, is the temple! However, this is not the first time Jesus has identified himself with the temple. The theme emerges a number of times in the Gospels. We get hints of it every time Jesus hands out divine forgiveness to people. In first-century Judaism, only the temple priests could pronounce forgiveness, and, even then, only after the appropriate sacrifice had been offered. This is why, after Jesus forgave the prostitute at the home of Simon the Pharisee, as discussed in the previous chapter, the guests murmured, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" (Luke 7:49b). Jesus handed out forgiveness whenever anyone humbly approached him. He acted like a mobile temple.

An explicit comparison between Jesus and the temple is found in Matthew 12 in a scene set long before Jesus took on the temple priests. The Pharisees had

criticised Jesus' disciples for doing what looked like work on the Sabbath day. Jesus responded:
"Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread —which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. Or haven't you read in the Law that the priests on Sabbath duty in the temple desecrate the Sabbath day [i.e., do work on the Sabbath] and yet are innocent? I tell you that something greater than the temple is here. "— Matthew 12:3–6

The logic goes like this: priests are exempt from the Sabbath law when working within the precinct of the temple; how much more then are the disciples exempt when working in the vicinity of the Messiah. Jesus, according to these words, is more than the temple. This is an extraordinary statement in its first-century context.

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem, entered the temple and declared its ministry bankrupt, he was not acting as a mere religious radical. According to the witness of the Gospel writers, he was acting as God's replacement temple, or, perhaps more accurately, as the reality to which the temple pointed all along. All that the temple had meant for Israel for almost one thousand years was now to be found in Israel's Messiah. The presence of God which human beings so longed for was to be found through a personal connection with Christ, not in a building in East Jerusalem. The hunger for divine teaching could be satisfied, not in the courts of a glorious sanctuary, but by feeding on the words of Jesus. True "pilgrims" could henceforth declare their praises, not within the walls of one sacred building, but wherever people gathered in honour of the Messiah. And forgiveness of sins could be enjoyed through the one priestly sacrifice of Jesus, not through priest and sacrifice.